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How Should We Live?

A Study of Social Critical Theory, Feminist Utopianism,
Anarchism and Eco-political Thought

A Thesis submitted
in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
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Abstract of a Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
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by

Seònaid Mary-Kate Espiner

Resistant discourses such as feminism, anarchism and environmentalism can be read as assertions that social life could be arranged and experienced in ways other than how heteropatriarchal capitalism structures society and culture. These criticisms are both utopian and ontological. Inherent in these critical discourses is both the concern that things are not as they 'should' or could be, and the proposition that dominant discourses do not hold a monopoly on reality. This play between reality and improvement, between the possible and the immanent, is a hallmark of utopianism, and is well-trod ground in utopian theory. Holding academic work, activism and fiction to be collaborators in a perhaps unintentional utopian project, I analyse a number of examples from fictional writing, resistant discourses and social critical theory. In the postmodern era however, resistance and even the suggestion of alternatives to heteropatriarchal capitalism seems particularly difficult and likely to be subsumed by dominant discourses. Yet although resistant discourses remain entangled with dominant ones, unable to transcend the cultural conditions which produce them, they all nonetheless contain ideals and alternatives for

world-making. In this thesis I argue that utopianism is not irrelevant, but immanent, while also seeking to problematise and disprove that claim by examining some of the concepts and assumptions usually attached to the concept 'utopian'. In reading these discourses as utopian, and by drawing on a body of work in utopian studies which has become increasingly nuanced over time, I offer a conceptualisation of utopianism and resistance in terms of fragments and unintentionality. I argue that postmodern utopianism might be described as a utopianism which is expressed through the *particular*. I frame these practices of utopianism as fragments of an assemblage or collective utopian and resistant project which negates the totality of dominant discourses and hierarchy in western culture, even while this reading reflects, rather than transcends, the postmodern preoccupation with particularity.

Key words: Critical theory, resistant discourses, feminism, anarchism, environmentalism, eco-politics, utopianism, fiction

Introduction

“Utopia is on the horizon: When I walk two steps, it takes two steps back. I walk ten steps, and it is ten steps further away. What is Utopia for? It is for this, for walking” (Eduardo Galeano, qtd. in Racine et al.).

Walking is an apposite metaphor for this thesis. Not necessarily in the sense of stumbling in vain towards an ever-moving horizon, but rather in that movement itself, going on, is a practice of both writing and hope. There is no end goal, no final horizon to attain. The movement itself is what utopianism and what theory, is perhaps ‘for’. Nonetheless, this thesis purports to do a number of more specific things. Firstly, to point out the persistence and variety of utopianism, particularly where it appears in places or texts not usually considered to be first and foremost “utopian”. Relatedly, this thesis positions current theoretical and political discussions and conundrums within the domain of a utopian question which might be put broadly as “how should we live?” (Levitas, “The Imaginary” 48). Secondly, this thesis seeks to understand how some aspects of utopian thought interact with various postmodern characteristics in theory, culture and discourse. In particular, I look at utopianism in relation to identity, fragmentation and boundary-dissolution, and how these may be a part of the production of resistance to existing orders (in theory, fiction and activism alike) and the imagining of revolutionary change in a cultural and political context that assimilates or makes impossible utopian impulses.

What seems perhaps most striking about utopianism is its persistence. Although supposedly dead, repressed or made difficult under conditions of postmodern capitalism

and neoliberalism, utopianism, I argue, has not sunk into irrelevance. Perhaps it is, as Levitas describes the utopian impulse, “an anthropological given that underpins the human propensity to long for and imagine a life otherwise’, a material desire that lies in ‘hunger, loss, and lack’” (Levitas, “Discourses” 5). A summation of the cultural present is neither that it is un-utopian, nor that there are no possible imaginings aside from those of crisis, apocalypse and dystopia. Alternative visions have not all been forgotten, books burnt, suspected utopians locked up forever. Alternatives *do* exist, and their suppression consists in the perception, ideology or myth that ‘there is no alternative’. What follows is an exploration of how alternatives are constructed within and from these constraints, nested in the present cultural circumstances. More specifically, this thesis examines what some versions of alterity look like in a culture of oppressive capitalist, heteropatriarchal and anthropocentric systems which repress or co-opt alternatives.

Utopianism is always political, and as a driving force of resistant movements, utopianism has long been advanced as “a vehicle for radical change” (Moylan, “Further Reflections” 6). It is today kept alive in radical movements, especially within anarchism, feminism, Marxism, eco-political and postcolonial discourses (6). In this thesis I explore how theoretical, fictional and political discourses seek to critique, change, or put forward alternatives for human living, relating, being and knowing, namely through feminism, anarchism and eco-political thought. After all, what else *is* a resistant discourse if not an assertion (however latent, hidden or implicit) that other ways *could* be possible?

A radically different system would surely include the end of capitalism and the alienating modes of life it engenders. Yet capitalism dominates in a way that is so absolute that, as Jameson famously puts it, it seems easier to imagine the end of the world than to

imagine the end of capitalism (qtd. in Buchanan 88). Not just an arbitrary or abstract economic system, capital, as Perlman writes, capitalism is “a form of daily life” (qtd. in el-Ojeii 230) which infiltrates many aspects of existence. Capitalism’s continuation and expansion presupposes the singular and essential condition, that of “the disposition of people to continue to alienate their working lives and thus reproduce the capitalist form of daily life” (qtd. in el-Ojeii 230). So dominating is this form of organisation and exploitation of human life that in contemporary western societies capitalism appears as the “natural” way in which to organise society, to the effect that there seems to be no alternative (Anderson, “Emergency Futures” 4; Buchanan 86; McManus; Wright 2). This insidious notion, that no other way of life is possible, oppresses and precludes the imagining of otherness, allowing us only to desire more of the same (Cevasco 57).

However as Fournier wryly notes, whoever cannot imagine a ‘better’ alternative may be those who benefit most from capitalism (191), and, as the texts and theories in this thesis demonstrate, imaginings of alternatives are in fact plentiful. It is worthwhile remembering that “again and again, far stranger things happen than the end of the world” (Solnit 1). In fact, it is more unrealistic to believe in an unchanging present, or in the superiority of current postmodern western culture. As Terry Eagleton puts it, “to deny that it will be quite different in the manner of post-histoire philosophising, is to offend against the very realism on which such theorists usually pride themselves. To claim that human affairs might feasibly be much improved is an eminently realistic proposition” (qtd. in Pepper 19). The work of imagining alternatives is not simply fanciful, but pragmatic.

Against the grain of inevitability and dystopianism, rife in popular culture, politics and academia, in this thesis I take a deliberately optimistic approach whereby I am not

interested in what *will* happen according to dominant discourses, nor the most popular or prevailing images of the future or utopia/dystopia. Rather, I attend to more marginal, hopeful and perhaps adventurous texts and discourses which unapologetically present ideas and visions which depict ‘something else’ or invoke a sentiment of ‘not-yet’. This is not a discussion of what ‘the future’ *will* be like according to technocratic extrapolations or environmental apocalypse as the news media, popular science-fiction, dystopian films, futurist speculations or even some social theorists are keen to evoke. In the mainstream, futurism does not so much offer radical utopian alternatives but rather extrapolates the present into a future time and so does not challenge or reimagine current social relationships and institutions but rather adapts and reinforces them. As Bookchin puts it, futurism often redeems rather than critiques dominant discourses and so “in effect, does not enlarge the future but annihilates it by absorbing it into the present” (*Ecology of Freedom* 133). As Bookchin argues, this popular kind of futurism is anti-utopian in that it “annihilates the imagination itself by constraining it to the present, thereby reducing our vision—even our prophetic abilities—to mere extrapolation” (133). I side-step this narrower approach to thinking about what is ‘not-yet’, by instead foregrounding alterity and resistance, as opposed to futurism.

In this thesis, utopianism is as much about the past and present as it is about futures. In fact, I do not enlist the idea of ‘the future’ much at all, which can lose lived realities, feelings and human experience in the abstraction. Call it, perhaps ‘feelings about alternative presents/futures’, discursive ‘yearnings’ for alterity, and alternative ways of perceiving or identifying the utopianism in the present even where it seems un-representable. The texts and theories explored evoke a sense of the possible as that which they can gesture towards but cannot completely represent, and yet these also remain always tied to the text and the

cultural conditions which produce it. In a sense, this melds the present and future because of the capacity of texts and other cultural artefacts to change how we experience the present and this makes possible more or different futures. It is about what already *is* possible now, and, given all of the texts I study have already been written, some many decades ago, it is perhaps most of all about what *was* possible. Yet as ‘actants’ which exist in the world, these texts and theories have the potential to participate in the past, present and future.

Such an account of utopianism foregrounds immanence as much as transcendence. Utopianism, wonder and hope are always embodied and material. As Ahmed puts it,

Wonder and hope involve a relationship to the present and to the present as affected by its imperfect translation of the past. It is in the present that the bodies of subjects shudder with an expectation of what is otherwise; it is in the very unfolding of the past in the present. The moment of hope is when the ‘not yet’ impresses upon us in the present, such that we must act, politically, to make it our future. If hope impresses upon us in the present rather than being merely ‘futural’ (Benjamin 1997), then hope requires that we must act in the present, rather than simply wait for a future that is always before us. (Ahmed 251).

Hope impresses upon us in a way that is not transcendent, but bodily. We really feel, physically, this sense of what *could be* and this demands immediate action. The ‘not yet’ is experienced in our own materiality, and of what *could be* arising from actions right now in the present.

With this in mind, I seek to conceptualise the immanence of utopianism in several ways. Firstly, through reading social critical theory and resistant discourses as utopian I argue for the persistence of utopianism and claim that most social theory harbours utopian hopes. By doing so I also work towards testing and reforming the boundaries of the concept of utopianism for this thesis. By suggesting that a wide variety of academic and public discourse relates to maintaining, criticising, and seeking to 'improve' ways of living, the underlying question of this thesis is 'how should we live'? I raise this question not necessarily in order to answer it, but rather pose it as a point of commonality between various theoretical discussions about identity, gender, ecology, relationships, power and subjectivity. I read these different texts and fictions as different manifestations of this same anxiety, or playful exploration, about how to live. Admittedly, framing the question in terms of 'how *should* we live' is slightly facetious, and I use 'should' to draw attention to, in order to problematise, authoritative 'shoulds'. There is of course, no final should, no final utopia. At the same time, I intend to take quite seriously these 'shoulds' and what they tell us about the cultural present.

Secondly, this thesis seeks to understand how some of the inherent problems of utopian thought surface, and interact with various postmodern theories and the current cultural and political landscape. I am especially concerned with notions relating to identity, fragmentation and the (theoretical, cultural and social) dissolution of boundaries. I posit these postmodern characteristics as relevant to the question of creating resistance to existing orders (in theory, fiction and activism alike), and imagining revolutionary change in a cultural and political context that assimilates utopian impulses. For example, the fragmentariness of postmodern theory and politics is frequently considered problematic

where it means the ‘splitting’ of groups, communities and even individuals, into single causes or singular identities, in keeping with how many critical theorists view the postmodern condition as the end of all ‘grand narratives’ and the meaningless circulation of commodities, identities and signs.

Situating this theoretical exploration ‘in’ postmodernism, and also exploring, using and critiquing various ‘postmodern’ cultural and social theories, provokes some complexities I aim to explore. In a sense, this thesis is itself a critical utopian text in that no ‘solutions’ are offered, but various ‘alternatives’ or attempts at solutions are explored and then problematised. Such a celebration of plurality and fluidity is also, I argue, characteristic of contemporary postmodern culture. The attitude towards utopianism I take in this thesis is influenced by the literature on feminist or “critical utopianism”, utopias which explore utopianism by including problems and imperfections, processes and relationships rather than harmonious end-states (Moylan, *Demand* 26). Critical utopianism is not so much about trying to construct the future but rather to “hold open the act of negating the present and imagine any of several possible modes of adaptation to society and nature based generally upon principles of autonomous mutual aid and equality” (26). In this thesis, I examine feminist, anarchist and environmental-related discourses which contest dominant constructions of how things are and ‘should be’, but without suggesting a singular foreclosed alternative. In saying that, the texts and discourses which I am terming ‘resistant’ share commitments to autonomy, mutual aid and equality, even as they may purport no singular solution or end point. After all, it is “not the answer we are after, but only how to ask the question” Le Guin’s Shevek says in *The Dispossessed* (187). In a sense, I am trying to ‘utopianise utopianism’, to find, test and push its limits, just as critical utopian novels do. I

enact a theoretical parallel borrowing from the practices of fictional critical utopian writing to explore how this might work in theoretical writing.

To this end, a prevailing concern in this thesis is with ‘alterity’ or ‘radical otherness’ and I read various discourses and texts as together presenting a plurality of current possibilities which do not assume to ‘know’ for sure what is and is not possible. These texts do not shy away from the un-representable and I do not dismiss some possibilities as ‘too fictional’, nor differentiate between the real and the fictional. Rather, this thesis is an attempt to conceptualise a sense of the ‘not-yet’ or ‘non’ through looking at a range of conceptualisations of the utopian, the non-representable, or more-than-representable (Brace and Johns-Putra 406), the suppressed and oppressed, regardless of whether they appear ‘realistic’. I argue that in suggesting that there is ‘something missing’ (Adorno, Bennett “Steps” 364) these texts contribute to a wider oppositional cultural resistance to the domination of patriarchy, capitalism and anthropocentrism. Yet I also question and investigate how it is possible to carry out any kind of radical imagining or put forward alternatives in the first place. This is a political concern given the vehement denial of there being alternatives to western, heteropatriarchal capitalism and the capacity of postmodern capitalism to assimilate and appropriate difference which nullifies utopian thought. However it is also an ontological question about creativity and novelty: the possibility of radical alterity given the impossibility of transcending reality.

Ambiguity, in many ways, remains an important aspect of discussions about utopianism more broadly. Variety and challenging of boundaries of genre and language are celebrated as integral facets of utopianism (Sargisson, *Utopian Bodies* 7). Chad Walsh, a literary critic writing in the 1960s, described utopian works as constituting “a peculiar body

of literature...its insights are simultaneously literary, sociological, political, psychological, ethical and religious” (Walsh 12) and utopian theorists hail from a range of disciplinary backgrounds within the humanities and social sciences. Throughout this thesis I attempt to merge insights from literary and social critical and cultural theories alike to place texts from utopian fiction and academic or activist theory within the same frame.

Utopianism also critiques the dominant ideologies of the present and in this thesis I comment on several aspects of postmodern culture, heteropatriarchy, anthropocentrism and capitalism in utopian terms. One form of this critique, in utopian theory, is an assertion that dominant discourses are as utopian as any end-state fictional utopia (Levitas, *Utopia* xi; Jacques 29; Scott-Samuel and Smith 6). Using this perspective we can instead ask, not whether a discourse *is* utopian or ‘true’, but rather, what its utopianism reveals about what the discourse, theory or model seeks to *do*, what worlds they bring about in their representations. Tally argues that when the fight is at the level of culture itself, then it is in the decoding of culture that we can grasp our historical situation (21). To this end I draw on some literary insights and build some of my analysis through examining fiction. As Tally explains, “the existential condition of personal and social life in societies organised under the capitalist mode of production...necessarily requires a form of interpretative or allegorical activity, which ultimately means that the task of making sense of one’s world falls into the traditional bailiwick of literary criticism” (21). Literary analysis can provide tools and strategies for coming to terms with the cultural present (and alternatives to it), and further, literary works are such products of cultural critique, but they also reflect and enact their own criticism of the present. In this manner, I hope to contribute to reading parts of culture and ideology with such ideas in mind.

To this end I oscillate between the 'content' of feminist, anarchist and environmentalist theories, and the practice of utopianism. In investigating the practice of utopianism I mean to examine the theoretical and practical paradoxes and problems which seem to arise during attempts to imagine anything radically different from the status-quo. An examination of both the content and practice or form of these discourses is arguably an appropriate approach to a topic which, in both literary and theoretical senses, has been concerned with both content and narrative. As Moylan explains, utopian texts, particularly critical utopian texts, contain tension between the registers of content, form and ideology (Moylan, *Demand* 48). Most chapters of this thesis emphasise theory, however in others the text itself is foregrounded (Chapters Three, Five, Seven and Eight in particular). In doing so, I seek to explore texts and ideas in a thematic manner, drawing together threads from texts which may not usually be considered as utopian.

The selection of the most recent, fashionable or 'cutting edge' texts has not been the priority for this study. Rejecting a notion of linear progress and 'future' and instead emphasising alterity, this thesis does not hold to the assumption that there is necessarily a need for more research, or that newness is always better, which would imply a kind of linear trajectory of 'improvement'. As McBean also argues, disrupting this linear view of progress, which is western in its outlook, seems apposite for both feminism and feminist utopianism (38). I want to suggest that, it is not just that 'new' or more research and thought is necessary, but that it is equally interesting to consider how already existing theories, discourses, texts and bodies of thought are used and understood. Further, perhaps akin to the estranging function of utopianism, it is easier and perhaps quite fruitful to look at works which are now slightly removed from the present. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see which ideas have become mainstream and taken for granted, and which

have been dismissed or marginalised. We can look backwards and forwards at once, looking back at works from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s to discern what might still be pertinent to the present. Further, perhaps theorists, writers and activists who watched postmodern capitalism begin can even shed light on the ways 'out', or at least may be able to conceive that there *could* be a way 'out' if there was a time in which it was also new.

However, my approach is not historical but thematic. This implies some continuity across discourses which unsettles the assumption that time (linearly and chronologically conceived, and in terms of 'progress') is a dividing or organising force. For example, anarchist thought from the 19th century and contemporary anarchist thought, while different, nonetheless share principles relating to emancipation and the critique of all domination and hierarchy. Eco-centric thought of the 1970s and contemporary discussions about environmentalism, materialism and queer ecology share interests in examining and retheorising relationships between the human and the nonhuman and the 'value' of nonhuman nature. There are enduring themes across generations of feminisms and, while 'waves' are sometimes a useful way of making sense of how discussions have changed over time, these may be arbitrary given the starker distinctions between, for example, 'liberal' and 'radical' feminists. I trace some of these discussions through a number of fictional and theoretical texts.

Thesis structure and overview

This thesis is divided into three parts. In Part One I explore how a variety of theoretical, fictional and resistant texts and discourses, as well as dominant discourses, can be read as utopian. In particular, these represent utopian ideas and theories which pertain

to the individual, identity, autonomy and the assumption of human agency and ability to create social change and put utopianism into practice. In Part Two I question whether utopianism may be more or other than 'willed transformation' (Raymond Williams qtd. in Moylan, *Demand* 29) by exploring utopianism as action rather than 'intended' plan. By looking at utopianism as 'implicit' in theory, writing, and as it applies to embodiment and materiality, including via ecological metaphors, I argue for conceptualising utopianism in terms of *alterity* and otherness rather than through assumptions about exclusive human agency. This is a form of utopianism which survives a critique of agency and withstands the denouncement of utopianism as 'top down' or totalitarian. In Part Three I explore whether the boundaries of utopianism can be stretched, or dissolved to include that which threatens the good and harmonious. In doing so, I arrive at a kind of all-inclusiveness which I suggest mirrors the denial of alternatives. I problematise and explore the idea of alterity and ask how, and even whether alterity is possible in a situation of an all-inclusive capitalism which appropriates, assimilates or represses anything threatening to the existing order.

Parts Two and Three are particularly concerned with the 'problem' of fragmentation and difference *via* the figure of the critical utopia: the critical utopia emphasising plurality, relationality, imperfection, difference and becoming (Moylan, *Demand* 36). That is, I am thinking through some of the conundrums which seem to appear when utopianism collides with the current postmodern, late capitalist and integral reality context, in order to think about why and how resistance to the status-quo seems so difficult. I liken this to traditional and critical utopianism. In this analogy, the critical utopia stands in for what is often said about postmodern theorising. As argued by a number of cultural theorists, focusing on difference protects capitalism—it does not differentiate oppressor from oppressed, and it does not grasp the totalising nature of capitalism (el-Ojeili 24). It is a form of all-

inclusiveness. According to theorists such as Wood and Jameson, it is *because* of capitalism's totalising nature that it is *necessary* to maintain totality as a category and tool for understanding the world (24). This is, more or less, the same criticism made of presenting alternatives or utopias. On the one hand, there is the persistent idea (from both left and right) that an alternative must be fully fledged and complete in order to be considered 'a competitor' to capitalism (because capitalism is so totalising, dominating, perfect, or superior). On the other hand are those who insist that the problem is the very attempt to create orders, visions or theories which are totalising, dominating and perfectionistic: these are 'utopian' characteristics in the traditional end-state totalitarian sense.

One manifestation of the 'postmodern fragmentation' to which I am gesturing can be seen in the perceived fracturing of class interests and other broad collective politics, into individualised needs and desires. The characterisation of postmodernism as opaque and repetitive seems analogous to descriptions and critiques of postmodern subjectivities in terms of interiority, narcissism and the proliferation of 'identities' (an argument I will expand on in Chapter Eleven). I argue that there are similarities between this conception or reflection of postmodern aesthetics and capitalist production, and that of the individualised and identified embodied subject who is called on to endlessly improve. Self-improvement, the wellbeing 'movement', healthism and other ways in which neoliberalism intersects with lifestyle, are forms of utopianism (Bauman "Utopia" 23; Hollow 20). Hollow, drawing on Bauman, reads British lifestyle magazines as utopian texts and suggests that utopian desires for a different world have migrated to become desires for a different self (Hollow 20).

It might be said then, that utopianism is not dead, but partly suppressed until it has re-emerged at the level of the particular, for example in the notion of self. In the idea of

self-improvement, idealistic utopianism sits alongside *continuous* improvement and potential, and within a culture which seems to otherwise suppress alternatives and utopianism. Rather than being 'anti-utopian' in the sense of denying progress and change, on the converse, current western culture seems obsessed with how we should live, at least as individuals. Every facet of *individual* life is available for scrutiny and dissection (Cederström and Spicer 21). The proliferation of promises of improvement and self-actualisation can be read as symptomatic of a 'sick' society (Cederström and Spicer), and also as expressions of utopianism in a culture which has forgotten how to imagine, or is actively repressing, utopian visions of communal harmony, journey and liberation. Postmodern utopianism might be described as a utopianism which manifests in the individualistic and the *particular*.

Disillusioned with totality, postmodernism seems more committed to partial and "realistic" politics and emphasises difference, rather than unity (el-Ojeili 243). For this reason, postmodern theorising is often read as ambivalent towards utopia, even opposed to utopian thought to the extent that utopianism implies totalisation and entirely harmonious relations (243). Yet at the same time, postmodernists also seem to convey visions or hopes such as a more pluralistic, democratic order, emancipation and deconstruction as a route to liberation which seem in other ways utopian, for example Derrida's democracy which is always "to come" (243). This seems somewhat contradictory, although as el-Ojeili notes, it may simply speak to the fact that socialism has always had a rather contradictory relationship with utopia (243). A route to a fairer society may require visions, and yet, the hierarchy and idealism of such vision-making seems antithetical to much materialist and socialist thought. In this thesis I try to bring together both the collective and the particular,

in alignment with anarchist approaches to thinking about individuality and communality without prioritising one above the other.

An initial foray into the literary and theoretical criticism of utopian literature (Chapter One) explores the changing use of utopia for societal transformation in theory and fiction. Utopian studies today rejects characteristics of harmony, totality, rationality, and an end-state utopia constructed through binary oppositions, as inherent to utopianism (Garforth “No Intentions” 10; Moylan 10, Sargisson, *Utopian Bodies* 7) almost “destroying utopianism in order to save it” (Moylan, *Demand* 46). This opens wide the concept of utopianism and I argue that ways of ‘reading’ fiction can be applied to the realm of critical theory and dominant discourses. I claim that, like in utopian fiction, academic work uses utopianism for political and transformative ends (Chapter One). By reading theoretical texts as utopian, I explore alternative worlds put forth in feminist theory and other critical theories such as anarchist and eco-political. I read these as alternative ways of perceiving the present which, like utopias, both critique dominant discourses and put forth different accounts of both possibilities and of what ‘is’. Doing so involves identifying the ideals or utopianisms inherent in dominant discourses such as capitalism, colonisation, science and heteropatriarchy which shape experiences of reality.

Ideals of dominant discourses such as capitalism, patriarchy and anthropocentrism are challenged by those resisting these; namely feminism, anarchism and environmentalism. Chapter Two is a more detailed examination of anarchist theory and environmentalist visions, linking the two as alike foregrounding non-hierarchical and co-operative forms of relating based on immanence, in an attempt to present a more detailed alternative to the alienation of contemporary life. I explore anarchist theory as a discourse which particularly presents clearly oppositional alternatives to current hierarchical modes of living. Anarchist

theory, I argue, can be read as offering utopianly political and theoretical approaches to thinking about 'how we should live', especially through a commitment to means-ends coherence. This means understanding and using utopianism as immanent, rather than as a distanced or ultimate goal which might be brought about by abstracted means. By both recognising anarchism as a utopian discourse, and taking seriously anarchist principles and alternatives, I attempt to develop a perspective on utopianism and postmodern theorising which has direction, but is not hierarchical.

By way of both illustration, and also in acknowledgment of fictional writing as utopian practice, I consider critical feminist utopian fiction as a place in which the alternatives set forth in anarchism, feminism and environmentalism are explored in depth (Chapter Three). *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Piercy) and *The Dispossessed* (Le Guin) are canonical feminist utopian/critical utopian texts which can be read as aligning with feminist, utopian, anarchist and ecological perspectives and depict everyday life and cultural, subjective and sociological details of imagined societies. However, many gaps, problems, and criticisms are left deliberately unresolved which permits open-endedness. Failure and imperfection serve a function in critical utopias (Moylan, *Demand* 36; Muñoz 9), yet they also problematise the notion of means-ends coherence (as I argue in Chapter Ten). These texts simultaneously 'succeed' and 'fail' to break with the dominant ideologies of their present. In particular, both texts to some extent foreground the individual in ways which arguably reinforce a discourse which locates the individual as the appropriate site of utopian transformation, rendering collective action irrelevant.

An interest in the self and subjectivity as the route to societal and cultural transformation is similarly present in postmodern and post-structural critical theory. In Chapter Four I suggest that reading these as anarchist makes space for postmodern

theorising to be politicised. Postmodern anarchist theory embraces the dynamic, plural and subversive aspects of postmodernism in order to engage with, appropriate and counter the particularities of politics and culture in the 21st century (Call, "Postmodern Anarchism" 3). Yet this is limited in the sense that assertions of subjectivity, autonomy and difference do not necessarily challenge power. Rather, autonomy and its fetishisation feeds into an appropriation of 'difference' and particularity by neoliberal capitalism. This challenges the very possibility of resistant subjectivities, which in turn problematises utopianisms and critical theories such as feminisms which seek individual autonomy and place hope in the idea of 'willed transformation'.

Perhaps it is possible to cling a little too tightly to the notion of autonomous 'willed transformation' which finds expression in the total end-state utopia. In Chapter Five I read Ellen Bravo's utopia "Not a Favour to Women" as a depiction of totality. I argue that the all-encompassing nature of Bravo's utopia does not leave room for the kind of otherness, accident or dissent which might be necessary for alterity. Without attempting to imagine radical alterity, such utopian ideas remain entangled with dominant discourses of patriarchy and capitalism. Equally, this is illustrative of how liberal or incremental approaches to utopianism and feminism do not sufficiently break with the present. Broadly speaking, this means that when feminism neglects the call to imagine beyond current ways of organising society, and reinforces hierarchy, capitalist modes of production, reproductivist views of futurity, and anthropocentrism, it loses its radical utopian potential. Feminism by itself may not be capable of radical change and utopian visions such as Bravo's demonstrate why utopianism, anarcha-feminism, queer theory and environmentalism are so necessary for a more developed intersectional feminism.

Part Two troubles ‘willed transformation’, knowledge and intention by exploring nonhuman agency and the possibility of locating alterity in what is not known or not representable (such as nonhuman natures). These utopianisms might be referred to as ‘accidental’. I frame these ideas by returning to eco-centric explorations of relating to ‘the other’ and I suggest that the difficulty in theorising about nonhuman natures may also be better approached through an understanding of nonhuman natures as ‘more than representable’, a term I borrow from Brace and Johns-Putra’s article on writing (406). Eco-political and environmentalist thought can also be understood as utopian in that such discourses are concerned with ‘the good life’ and how this might be approached through biocentric thinking and living. These can be further utopianly ‘activated’ through acknowledging shared threads between discourses such as feminism (eco-feminism), anarchism (natural anarchy, Green anarchy, veganarchism, nonhuman animal liberation) and queer theory (queer ecology). For example environmentalism need not hinge on the idea of ‘the future’ and of the future conceptualised in heterosexist terms as the reproduction of humans, but can consist of ‘making kin’ (Haraway 102), a queer ‘interesting optimism’ which inspires care and empathy—an imaginative and utopian act (Seymour 10).

These discourses both foreground the nonhuman and also apply ecological thinking and principles to human life and activity in ways which challenge characteristics of abstraction, hierarchy and separatism inherent to many traditional end-state utopias and dominant discourses. An appreciation of wonder and nonhuman agency *moves* us towards a kind of utopianism which at once seeks transcendence while being materially grounded: both radically other and totally unremarkable.

In Chapter Six I explore the difficulties and paradoxes inherent in the task of trying to imagine ‘otherwise’. I interrogate notions of ‘beyond’, novel, not-yet known and the more

than/non-representable and I posit this in relation to both the academic search for truth, and the artistic or utopian pursuit of alterity. Utopianism and theorising are both practices and creations which gesture towards 'otherness' and the 'not yet'. In this way, theorising and utopianism are linked through an interest in seeking to perceive and create the world in new ways which simultaneously critique the present. This is not just an academic point, but a political one. Dominant discourses and ways of knowing, like the end-state static totalitarian utopia, suppress ways of thinking which trouble any monopoly on truth. For example, wonder, a form of affectual engagement which moves bodies and promotes openness and less control, is suppressed by rationalist and positivist science in a techno-obsessed cultural climate which also routinely devalues art. Drawing from utopian and anarchist theory, a link can be made between the political (means-ends coherence) and the epistemological. Imagining 'otherwise' implies transcendence, but it must also be immanent. It is seemingly impossible to escape what we already 'know' and what is shaped by dominant discourses and power. Yet, this is nonetheless attempted in critical theory and fiction. These attempts can act as acts of imagination and empathy, reaching towards that which is not knowable, not-yet and 'other'.

The function of art and fiction, according to Marcuse, is to explore other ways of knowing, being, and relating in ways not-yet expressible in dominant discourses and I read this as an expression of utopianism (el-Ojeili 235). Postmodern feminist utopian novels in particular often depict, and require of the reader, a shift in thinking and interpreting the world, and illustrate what might be possible if this 'consciousness' is experienced differently (Wagner-Lawlor, Sargisson, *Contemporary* 229). As an example of "transformed consciousness" (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 229) in the novels *The Limits of Green* and *Running Away from Home* McAlpine explores the agentic, sometimes supernatural or

symbolic potentials of sound, geology and plant life (Chapter Seven). In line with other critical readings of feminist utopias, these novels trouble, probe and validate notions of refuge and hospitality. Yet again, texts like McAlpine's do not entirely break with the present, but also illustrate its contradictions. Depictions of destruction and resistance, which fall in line with critical utopianism, are also reminiscent of the postmodern destruction/deconstruction of grand narratives and totalities, which leaves rubble, waste and fragments in its wake.

Fragments, accidents, wildness and assemblages, however, might not be incompatible with utopianism. Chapter Eight explores the agency of nonhuman nature in relation to utopianism. I return to McAlpine's texts as fictional explorations of these ideas, which I read alongside the blog of the Christchurch based group Plant Gang and the theoretical work of Bennett, Latour and Morton. I suggest that there is a 'wildness' and groundedness about these depictions, in both McAlpine's blog and my analysis of Plant Gang, which may help formulate a utopianism which is materialist and ecological, while moving further away from a conceptualisation of utopianism as authoritative or 'top-down'. Further, such an approach does not require an assumption of anthropocentric agency: that humans must have full and exclusive control of all factors in order to enact utopianism (reasons which contribute to scepticism towards utopianism). In this way, I argue that there is an element of accident and non-intentionality in the utopian impulse and the 'not-yet conscious' (Bloch 42).

Materiality, immanence, proximity and relationality might be said to be characteristic of feminist utopianism, anarchism and ecology alike and present as a counter to hierarchy and abstraction. Chapter Nine brings together and also troubles the ways in which the threads between various resistant and dominant ideas interrelate. Having

prioritised alterity for utopianism, the idea of 'going beyond', I both evoke and problematise the notion of transcendence. This raises some theoretical dilemmas relating to the seeming inability of resistant discourses to transcend dominant ones without being assimilated.

Part Three further problematises and unpacks some of the theoretical dilemmas relating to utopianism, transcendence and traditional assumptions about utopianism raised in Part Two. In Chapter Ten I foreground that which seems to simultaneously threaten, yet potentially give rise to utopianism: dissent, pain, lack and entanglement with dominant discourses. However, this again raises a dilemma relating to boundaries and utopianism as defined by a dichotomy of inclusion/exclusion. Inclusivity may be a goal of non-hierarchical discourses such as anarchism and feminism, but including that which diverts from utopian goals seems to represent a disconnect of means and ends. Yet so too does a principle of exclusion.

Further, total inclusivity mimics something about postmodern capitalism. In Chapter Eleven I try to think together the inclusivity and plurality of postmodern capitalism with the notion of the separate and self-sufficient neoliberal subject. The fragments and particularities of postmodern culture, the interest in identities, self, subjectivity and difference are crucial both to capitalism and current critical theory and the hope for transformation via subjectivity, the individual and identity groups (women, LGBTIQ etc). According to Baudrillard, the way in which capitalism totally captures plurality and difference to exploit for profit creates a situation of total inclusivity leaving no possibility for alternatives (Grace 26; Featherstone 471). It would seem that this total inclusivity and elimination of lack (Baudrillard) cancels out utopia and the possibility of resistance to capitalism and heteropatriarchy. I interrogate what makes this so difficult, and consider

whether and to what extent resistant utopianisms can, theoretically, function in postmodern culture.

As Solnit writes, in recent times it seems as if the state of the world has become dire as wars, violence, oppressions, economic and ecological crises dominate the news (12). And yet, *also*, she emphasises, it is important to acknowledge that amongst this “we have also added a huge number of intangibles—rights, ideas, concepts, words to describe and to realise what was once invisible and unimaginable—and these constitute both a breathing space and a toolbox, a toolbox with which these atrocities can be and have been addressed, a box of hope” (12). I frame the ideas, texts and theories of this thesis in a similar manner. They are, as Solnit puts it, “intangibles”, they are in some ways ‘not yet’ here in the material present and they are difficult to pin down because they are frequently ‘more than representable’. These ideas and visions might be seen as also tools, a breathing space, a box of hope, and in this way they are immanent and have bearing on the present.

The purpose of this thesis is not to directly *answer* the question ‘how should we live’, but nor is it to pretend some sort of detachment and value-free position. It is something in between. As Timothy Morton cautions, “it is all very well to carp at the desires of others while not owning up to the determinacy of one’s own desire” and so “the only ethical option is to muck in” (*Ecology* 13). While it is not my intention to present a manifesto, this thesis is not apolitical. I have deliberately selected discourses and texts which I see as oppositional. I point to these as not necessarily solutions, but as starting or re-entry points for attempting to think about utopianism and alternatives in postmodernism. I present these as texts and discourses which are engaged in attempting to respond to problems which are currently very pressing: those of ecological collapse, domination by white heteropatriarchal capitalist structures, human and nonhuman exploitation (especially of the

working class, people of colour and women), the continuing marginalisation of subjectivities and ways of living which do not adhere to heteropatriarchal frameworks. While there is no 'final' or perfect answer that is *not* to say that therefore one should not try at all. Rather, in the spirit of the critical utopia, this is the very reason to make some attempts.

Part One: Utopian Intentions

“Politics without hope is impossible and hope without politics is a reification of possibility.”

(Ahmed 251)

Utopianism is an intervention. Amidst the seamless continuity presented by everyday life, the stagnantly persistent belief that no alternatives are possible, utopia breaks open the seamless and smooth skin of the status-quo and demands that life be different (Moylan, *Demand* 1). As both a self-reflexive object and a process which is never enclosed (Wagner-Lawlor 2) it demands we stop and ask: “how should we live?” (Levitas, “The Imaginary” 48). In short, a utopia is a dream of ‘something else’. It is yearning, desire, fear, speculation, warning, creation or play. As Sargent puts it, utopias are “social dreaming” (“In Defense” 11), and in Bloch’s terms, they are the desires for the “not yet” found in every kind of human activity, mode of thought and everyday life (Bloch 40; Anderson, “A Principle” 211). Contrary to the lay understanding of ‘utopia’ which has garnered connotations of perfection and totality, utopian studies and literature explores representations and possibilities of other ways of living together without seeking to foreclose the future as perfectible. Feminist utopian theorists such as Levitas and Sargisson approach utopianism as a process, a kind of praxis which involves studying utopias with a critical eye while also appreciating them as opportunities to openly explore what we believe is plausible or desirable in a society (Levitas, “Back to the Future” 538; Sargisson, *Utopian Bodies* 154). While utopianism can refer to a perfect, static, end-state society this is only one form of many. A broader view of utopianism includes utopias which are less

authoritative, more open-ended, playful, critical, incomplete, and which may not so much offer a complete view of a perfect society as gesture towards radical otherness, and different ways of sensing and experiencing the world.

Part One explores a variety of these utopianisms from traditional notions of utopia, to counter-cultural discourses, to critical utopias and social critical theory. I argue that utopianism has relevance for critical theory in that, being political and encouraging bold and radical thinking, utopianism allows theorists the space to both critique and reimagine aspects of culture and society, an interrogation of what the good life *is* being a stimulus for critical thinking and practice (Reedy 169). Several scholars stress the importance of utopia and revolution pertaining to theory and the way we ‘think’, as well as culture, society and the things we ‘do’ (Buchanan 96; Sargisson, *Contemporary* 12-24). Movements or theories such as feminism and ecologism can, as Sargisson demonstrates, offer a kind of utopianism which provides a way of carefully evaluating, through critique and vision, the way we live in relation to power, gender and ecology (Sargisson 12-24). In this thesis I read feminist, eco-political, environmentalist and anarchist oriented texts as forms of utopian writing.

For Raymond Williams the distinguishing feature of utopianism is “willed transformation”—not paradise already existing or brought about accidentally, but change brought about through human ‘intention’ (Moylan, *Demand* 29, 33). This is deeply connected with a particular understanding of human agency independent of nature. It seems no coincidence that the utopian novel appeared alongside the rise of the bourgeoisie in Europe, “a period of conscious human development, exploration of new lands, development of a new society, valorisation of freedom of will and rationality of mind: a period of political, economic and ideological struggle over the direction and form the brave

new world of capitalism would take” (29). Such attitudes underlie much theoretical and fictional writing, including, at least to an extent and in a complex manner, critical utopian writing and some critical theory. To this end, Part One is, in sum, an investigation of utopian ideas and theories which relate to the individual, identity and the assumption of human agency and ability to create social change and put utopianism into practice. That is, the critical discourses studied here might be viewed in terms of a utopianism that is intentional, complicated as this term may be.

Such ‘intentional’ (utopian) imaginings of alternative or possible societies has fallen out of favour in both popular and academic discourse alike, and seems particularly problematised by postmodern theory and culture. Current day mainstream western discourses, especially political and scientific rhetoric, seem particularly *anti*-utopian in that the very idea of alternatives has been abandoned (Jacobsen 24). Visions of alternative societies which seemed more popular in the ‘heyday’ of the critical utopia withered as later decades of the 80s, 90s and 2000s have brought only more extreme versions of capitalism, individualism and neoliberalism. Although the creation of literary utopias has not actually ceased, the general feeling in Western industrial societies is that “utopia is now unnecessary either because it has already arrived in daily life or because it represents a dream incapable of attainment” and is therefore irrelevant (Moylan, *Demand* 9). In postmodern capitalist western culture it might be said that utopia has already arrived in the seemingly endless production of goods, and apparent ‘progressive’ diversity, democracy and equality. Of course, this is not the experience of most people and one need barely scratch the surface to find the bitter realities of this utopic vision. As Sargent puts it, in political and economic discourse “we seem to be reverting to exclusive utopias that are for most people inseparable from dystopia” (Sargent, “In Defense” 13). This is also a time of suppressed

dissent, the rise of fascist, racist, white supremacist and misogynistic tendencies particularly in the 'alt right', urgent ecological crises, and widening inequalities in power and wealth which seem to make systems of oppression and power at least as opaque and overwhelming as ever, if not more so. What may initially appear as 'diversity' and amazing novel production turns out to be little more than constant, repetitive variations on the same and the suppression of alterity and the possibility for meaningful change (Andersen 5; Jameson, *Postmodernism* ix, 42; McManus n.p).

Although capitalism is supposedly the very best system that humanity can imagine, health, happiness, coherency, and meaningful work has not become readily available, as evidenced by increasing stress, unhappiness, depression, mental and physical suffering throughout western societies (Davies, *Happiness* 9; McGee 12). Most of the 'solutions' offered to pressing social, cultural and environmental problems consist in individual and individualised subjects seeking to change themselves in order to fit within this climate (Cederström and Spicer 21; Davies 9; McGee 49). What seems to have happened is that "the utopian imagination has atrophied under the co-opting mechanisms of capitalism – increasingly debilitated in recent times by the twin disciplinary forces of a neoliberal regime that reduces everything to the counterfeit utopia of entrepreneurial success and an anti-utopian pragmatism that disempowers radical action by conflating the utopian with the totalitarian" (Moylan, "Further Reflections" 6). Resistance and advocating for alternatives seems impossible, even unimaginable as any discourse of resistance comes to be assimilated into the market logic of capitalism as products for a new niche or 'lifestyle' (Pawlett 35). The 'death' of utopia, the difficulty of resistance to neoliberalism and

capitalism, and the rise of the pursuit of individual happiness is linked. As Baccolini points out,

since the conservative reaction of the 1980s and the triumph of free-market liberalism of the 1990s, utopia has been both attacked and co-opted. It has been conflated with materialist satisfaction and thus commodified and devalued. In a society where consumerism has come to represent the contemporary modality of happiness, utopia has become an outmoded value. The pursuit of individual happiness, which is none other than material success, corresponds to what Darko Suvin has called the “Disneyfication strategy”. (“The Persistence of Hope” 518-519)

Some theorists and philosophers sense a kind of ‘stagnancy’ of current western cultures leading to assertions such as ‘utopia is dead’, everything has already happened (Baudrillard, qtd. in Nassehi 62) and history has ended (Fukuyama, qtd. in Nassehi 61). Unlike the modernists, postmodern citizens no longer believe in ‘progress’ (Levitas, “Discourses” 123). In part, this seems to stem from an analysis of postmodern capitalist cultures as characterised by over-production, and intolerance of surprise, mystery and risk. Theorists such as Jameson, Haraway and Baudrillard argue that current Western culture is dominated by science and the media which are in turn constructed in relation to economic logic (Pawlett 34). According to Jameson, the “frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods (from clothing to airplanes), at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation” (*Postmodernism* 4) so that creativity and thought are increasingly commodified. This commodification and economic importance leaves the drive to produce more and more as somewhat meaningless beyond economics.

Because of this, Jameson and Baudrillard see postmodernism as opaque, but ultimately shallow.

However 'shallowness' or triviality alone is not the primary concern. These criticisms are not superficial in any sense, but rather aimed at the cultural logic which underlies a system of western, heteropatriarchal and capitalist domination. This is not simply of 'theoretical' interest. Jameson writes that "American postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and terror" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 5). Similarly Baudrillard, in Featherstone, sees dominant discourses and power structures, what he terms "integral reality" as all-encompassing to the point of excluding resistance and alternatives (Featherstone 473). However the real underside of this façade is not utopian inclusiveness, harmony and abundance, but discrimination, extreme poverty and discrimination (Featherstone 473). Trying to conceptualise some sense of the logic and totality of these dominant discourses and power structures is necessary in order to understand the challenges in resisting them.

Class war, poverty, inequality, white supremacy, anthropocentrism, homophobia and sexism are all 'real' world and material concerns. However there are cultural and discursive correlates which may be worth interrogating. This 'death' of utopia, the hope for alternatives, might also be contextualised in relation to the proliferation of particular kinds of scientific knowledge and models which infiltrate western cultures. For example, in what Baudrillard terms the 'hyperreal', images, signs and models have come to dominate Western culture (Grace 26) through science, media, academia and art. Science in particular

imagines that seeking perfect models and representations, generated by ‘experts’ or authorities, will improve society (Davies, *Happiness* 9). Yet scientific knowledge does not innocently reflect reality (that itself being impossible), but is about “worldly, materialized, signifying and significant power” (Haraway, *Modest Witness* 51) and such models are grounded in assumptions that all phenomena and experience can be represented by particular ways of thinking (Davies 7). For example, Davies is sceptical that “core questions of morality and politics will be solvable with an adequate science of human feelings” (7), that rationality and mathematics have the capacity to solve dilemmas which are social and moral. It is not the ‘explanatory’ or ‘predictive’ power of any particular model or way of modelling which is being held to account here, rather the interest is in the prolific influence of such models, and the ways in which these precede lived, embodied experience. This is problematic not because there is some inherent evil in the idea of making models or representations, but rather because of who creates such models and who they serve, what views and interests come to be seen as ‘true’. If these then precede the experiences of people excluded from truth-making powers, then those who make the most influential models (namely scientists, economists, medical professionals and the media) control reality. Such model making and attempts to control reality is, I argue, one version of utopian work.

Frequently the term ‘utopian’ is used to imply that something is far-fetched, imaginary or ridiculous. Kitch’s critique of utopian thinking holds it as opposite to realism and ‘real life’ problems (23). However Jameson argues that utopias prove the *limits* of our imagination and that people seem incapable of imagining something that is actually totally different, as usually utopias reflect the present (Garforth, “No Intentions” 13; McNeill 64). In many ways, utopias and science-fiction demonstrate “our incapacity to imagine the future” (Moylan, *Demand* 41). The concerns of utopian proposals are usually *not* imaginary, but

grounded in 'real' issues facing a society. This leads Dougal McNeill to suggest that realism can also be utopian, and realism too shows us the limits of our ability to imagine things which have actually happened (McNeill 78). 19th century anarchist Proudhon has said that "the ideal...has its base, its cause, its power of development, in the real' and a genuinely realistic art would have as its 'goal' in fact, to evoke 'the ideal'" (Cohn 126). Such play between the 'real' and the 'ideal', and the ways these fold into one another, underlies the utopianism of both resistant and dominant discourses. In dominant discourses this functions as a method of social control (Grace 26).

Historically, feminists, Marxists, socialists, anarchists and civil rights activists have resisted such social control. However Baudrillard argues that capitalism today is capable of absorbing and neutralizing resistant politics and instead coding them as "lifestyle positions" which feed consumption rather than present any fundamental challenge to the system (Pawlett 35). Positions or ideologies which seek to truly challenge power and create social change, simply become 'consumer choices' or 'market niches' and in this way are absorbed by the very power they seek to challenge. For example, the word 'revolution' has come to be associated with supposedly new or novel commodities such as certain technologies, beauty products, health products, clothing, food, business advice, media and so on (as the simplest google search of the word will indicate). In this way, a word which could threaten social order and power has been made 'safe' by 'the market'. Such control through indifference and incorporation structures not only consumption, but also the production of knowledge and information (35).

Similarly, Irigaray makes the argument that Western society has entered some kind of state of stagnation. She laments that

Humanity seems past. Philosophies and religions are in a period of taking stock. The dominant discipline in the human sciences is now history. Sociology, which shares the spotlight with it, is dedicated to the description of what already exists. We should be what apparently we are, what we have already shown of ourselves. As for the rest, our becoming would be prescribed by our genes, or by what has already been deciphered of them. Our growth is to have stopped one day. We are to have become at best objects of study. Like the whole living world, destroyed little by little by the exploration-exploitation of what it is instead of cultivating what it could become. (*Between East and West* vii)

If modernism was committed to progression and coherency, then it seems that postmodernism is characterised by reflection and fragmentation. According to Irigaray here, sciences, which dominate much academic and public discourse, are predominantly interested in mapping what is supposedly already 'there', that is, the status-quo or dominant orders. This leaves little room for change through alterity. As Jameson puts it, while modernism was interested in a coherent 'progressive' project, and looked forward to the outcomes of certain changes, postmodernism is more "distracted" and "only clocks the variations themselves" aware that "the contents are just more images" (*Postmodernism* ix). There is nothing but more of the same.

Yet theorists such as Irigaray still posit utopian sentiments and alternatives to this stagnant indifference, incorporation and endless production and insist on future thinking about what society could become. If we have stopped thinking forward, stopped reimagining what we want our society and lives to be like, then does this mean that current academic work and dominant political discourses simply innocently reflect reality? This

represents a conundrum about the difference between 'reality' and 'fantasy', a dilemma which I am positing as not only philosophical, but also political. That is, given that claims about reality and fantasy are always situated, it is necessary to interrogate such claims with a view to questioning what kinds of action follows, or what is the nature of the activity of the discourse itself. el-Ojeili asserts that "a robust, rational utopianism is required in postmodern times" because a society lacking utopianism becomes heteronomous, conformist and closed (246). In what follows I explore utopianism in relation to social and cultural change, academic, activist and critical discourse, beginning with how utopianism has grown from its roots in fiction.

Chapter One: Utopianism: More to Occupy

Throughout at least the last five hundred years of western culture writers, theorists and revolutionaries have queried the status-quo and imagined or argued for different ways of living. Although often finding expression in fictional utopias, these ideas can also be traced in non-fiction texts and discourses. In this chapter I combine insights and arguments about utopianism from literary theory, utopian theory, social critical theories and feminist theory. Feminist and critical utopian theory provide the backbone for subsequent chapters in this thesis. My interest is in, not literary utopianism primarily, but in reading social critical theories and dominant discourses as kinds of utopian texts. In other words, I draw on literary and utopian theory in order to develop a way of reading applicable to fictional, theoretical and resistant or activist texts. The multitudinous uses and definitions of utopianism are always entangled with particular ideological structures, and with this in mind, the second half of the chapter is concerned with the ways in which utopianism can be used and identified in both critical and dominant discourses. In particular I am concerned to examine notions of hierarchy, nonhuman nature, gender and capitalism, and I identify feminism, anarchism and ecopolitical thought as discourses engaging in the act of imagining alternatives to these structures and discourses.

Given that this thesis seeks to build a picture of utopianism as both fiction and theoretical criticism, in this chapter I sketch the historical and present day concerns of utopian fiction, utopian theory and how feminist and anarchist theories might be related to this genealogy. Two main strands in utopian theory can be distinguished. One assumes utopias necessarily depict a perfect, static state, and the other takes utopianism to mean

anything which suggests the desire for a better way of life, beyond explicit description. Until more recently, the 'programmatic' or 'end-state' view has dominated understandings of utopia. Contemporary utopian theory, and critical utopias in particular, complicate this view (Levitas, "Back to the Future" 538; Sargisson, *Utopian Bodies* 154; Moylan, *Demand* 40). In what follows I explore the development of utopian thought as a method of social and cultural critique.

Utopian Literary Theory

The story of utopia seems to begin with the idea that society is an entity which can and should be 'improved' through reason, order and human will. In studies of utopian literature, Thomas More is credited with the 'invention' of the utopian genre having coined the word 'utopia' when he wrote his novel by the same name in 1516. The word is said to be a combination of the Greek *eutopos* ('good place') and *outopos* ('no place'), a pun which is today taken as a playful expression of *both* of these meanings, although More's intentions remain, of course, unknown (Jacobsen; Sargent, *Utopianism* 2). More's *Utopia* is one of many modernist utopian works offering a detailed description of an improved society, and an exploration (whether serious or ironic) of social life organised according to rational principles. In such utopias, values are conveyed through themes of class hierarchies, or absolute equality of races and genders, transparency spatially and socially, and protection of nature and asexuality (Pohl 6). This interest in hierarchy and order is conveyed through the form of such texts which are often organised into hierarchically categorised topics and defined by interlinking aesthetic and moral values, with beauty and goodness being the most important, and beauty being equivalent to order (Blaim 6, 9). Part of this orderliness

means that utopias are often constructed through oppositions such as a dichotomy of inside/outside, with the inside being harmonious, self-contained and ordered, and the outside being dystopian, contaminated and devalued (Burwell 65). Such utopias have sometimes been described as the “speaking picture” (Manuel and Manuel 3) in which representation of the society is privileged above the narrative (although of course it is narrative that makes the text possible to begin with (Marin 55). That is, narrative is subordinate to description, and More, for example, tries to build a picture of the society he imagines, rather than tell a story.

As Le Guin puts it, “the purer, the more euclidean the reason that builds a utopia, the greater is its self-destructive capacity” (Le Guin, “A Non-Euclidean view” 6). In the 20th Century, such authoritarian ideas linked to totality, reason and human will were both tested and undermined by the events of that century. The implication that order, perfection and rationality are routes to the ‘good life’ was problematised in literary dystopias of the 20th century such as Zamyatin’s *We* (1924), Orwell’s *1984* (1949), Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), and Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985), reflecting the horrors of war, racism, patriarchy and colonisation. Consequently, the post-war era of the 20th century is said to have been a time of slump in, and even destruction of, utopic thinking, as Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany and the corporate US co-opted utopia in order to reinforce authoritarian systems and ideologies, leading to a wide distrust in the idea of utopia (Moylan, *Demand* 7). Criticisms of utopia are usually concerned with this perceived trait of utopianism as dangerously perfectionistic and authoritarian. For example, according to Kitch, utopias push for perfect social programmes which are based on models which are too simple to encompass the complexities of human needs and behaviour, and this is oppressive, for example, the ‘caring’ state may be controlling and oppressive (Kitch 46). Yet the 20th century

also witnessed the establishment of the “free-market utopia” which soon became indistinguishable from dystopia for most people (Sargent, “In Defense” 12).

In the 21st Century (and late 20th Century), utopian theorists and authors contested the equivocation of utopianism with order and perfection. According to Sargent, ‘perfection’ is *not* the right word to apply to utopia, and he argues that most literary utopias, throughout the ages, have not portrayed a society that is perfect or static, but merely an ‘improvement’ on the author’s current society (Sargent, “In Defense” 13). This seems particularly true of critical utopias such as Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* or Piercy’s *Woman on the edge of time* which use utopianism in such a way which demonstrate the dangers of rationality, power, linearity, the valuing progress over process and using the ends to justify the means, rather than the danger of utopian thinking itself (13). According to Garforth, the conception of utopianism as preoccupied with progress, perfection, rationality and even future thinking, may reflect *modernism’s* utopianism rather than utopianism generally. Further, these might be characteristics of the bourgeois western patriarchal and masculine imagination specifically, which is not capable of representing all of utopianism and does not do justice to the genre or to the broader school of thought, in particular the works of women writers (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 37). In more recent times “utopia has shifted from a context of social theory wedded to rationality, perfectibility, and progress, to one characterised in terms of desire, anti-foundationalism, and fragmentation” (Garforth, “No Intentions” 10). This interest in fragmentation and fluidity of course, reflects aspects of postmodern life and academic theory (as I will discuss in subsequent chapters).

Yet to further turn utopia on its head, it is worth noting that although utopias are sometimes considered to be serious suggestions for how society should be, it is problematic to read even More’s foundational text as instructive and programmatic. In other words,

perhaps rationality and order were never dominating characteristics to begin with, but subjects of critique themselves. There are so many multiple and opposing readings of More's *Utopia* that, as Chambers writes, "few books have been more misunderstood than *Utopia*" (Chambers 17). Many critics read the book as satirical, but the contradictions and complexities of the book make it difficult for scholars to decide on what parts are satirical, and which are serious political criticism or suggestions for living. For example, Kautsky believes that More was trying to deliver a socialist message about communal living and sharing resources, whereas Chambers sees *Utopia* as an undesirable state which is stern and patriarchal, and which was never intended to be viewed as a paradise (Kautsky 16; Chambers 17). C.S Lewis claims to resolve such confusion over these contradictions by suggesting that *Utopia* should be read as a playful, fun and imaginative book, and more like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Butler's *Erewhon* than a political manifesto (Lewis 68). All of these readings are of course deeply entwined with the utopian politics of any particular critic or theorist.

Against this view of utopias and utopian thinking as authoritarian and problematic, contemporary utopian theorists read utopian writing as experimental, playful and active. Sargisson defines utopias as discourses or practices which present an estranged perspective, dissatisfaction with the political present, creativity and alternatives, subversion, transformation and transgression of style and form, the mixing of theory, political commentary and fiction (Sargisson, *Utopian Bodies* 7). These elements do not align with an 'end-state' view of utopia, but propose utopianism as both dynamic, experimental and hopeful. Perhaps the views of such theorists can be read as part of an effort to bring about, or reflect, particular ways of living and thinking. In particular, valuing 'freedom', choice and plurality over order.

This version of utopianism is indebted to Ernest Bloch (1885-1977), a Marxist and utopian philosopher, who contended that “to limit the utopian to the Thomas More variety, or simply to orientate it in that direction, would be like trying to reduce electricity to the amber from which it gets its Greek name and in which it was first noticed” (Bloch 45). Bloch sees the ‘ideal state’ version of utopia, and literary utopias in general, as only one expression of utopianism, and suggests that daydreams, aspects of everyday life, philosophy, medicine, technology, architecture, geography, art and music are all kinds of utopian desire, thinking or activity (45). Broadly, this version of utopia pertains to any feelings of hope, and thinking about collectivity and communalism (45), but also more generally to various incomplete, fleeting “intended directions” and “appearances” but “which are driven to become symbols of perfection, to a utopianly essential end” (44). This hope that things be different, the “Not-Yet-Become”, is assumed by Bloch to often be ‘unconscious’ (or “Not-Yet-Conscious”) in the sense that these are they are not yet formed as coherent thoughts for how life could be better (42). Following Bloch, Jameson argues that the ‘utopian impulse’ is an essential aspect of popular culture, media and art and that it is the expression of an emancipatory collective view (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 54).

There is no ‘essential’ utopian element, then, but perhaps a more relevant question is not what utopias *are*, but what they can *do*. Because utopias show what society could *be*, and they reflect the current society of the author from an estranged distance, usually utopias are perceived to be subversive and capable of revealing a clearer, or at least refreshing, perspective on how we live (Sargisson, *Utopian Bodies* 9). As Sargent puts it, we can think of utopia as “a carnival/funfair mirror in reverse; we hold the distorted contemporary society up to the mirror and it shows us a better possibility” (Sargent, “In Defense” 12). However, they do not necessarily always show this ‘good’ and simple

possibility because utopias are also experimental and transformative by nature (Pohl 2): they are transgressive and challenge boundaries (between disciplines, social behaviour, conceptual), allowing the creation of a space in which new ways of relating to the world can be practised (Sargisson, *Utopian Bodies* 10).

Because utopian texts evoke estrangement and subversion they function as political commentary (Moylan, *Demand* 33). Despite much recent anti-utopian rhetoric, utopianism has become again important to social, political and discursive struggles in recent times, as evidenced by a revival of scholarly interests since the early 2000s, and by anti-capitalist activist discourse and practice (Jameson, *Archaeologies* xi and 1). Moylan states that “utopia opposes the affirmative culture maintained by dominant ideology” and “negates the contradictions in a social system by forging visions of what is not yet realised either in theory or in practice” and in this way “contributes to the open space of opposition” (Moylan, *Demand* 1). According to Sargent, utopias ask questions and suggest improvements of social, political and economic natures, whilst paying attention to the practicalities of everyday life often omitted from social theory (Sargent, *Utopianism* 5). Similarly for Kitch, utopias are a kind of social protest simply because they imagine alternatives (23). Samuel Clark also asserts that, while utopias can be used to convey many different kinds of views, and for different purposes, generally they can be seen as political *interventions* and “*public acts*: attempts to do something to and with others by writing and publishing, whether it is to debate, to motivate, to shock or to delight” (Clark 13). Utopian writing is considered a practice which is inclusive of artistic, aesthetic and political elements, and one which usually pertains to collectivity.

In this vein, current utopian theory stresses immanence over transcendence, and contemporary ‘immanent’ non-intentional utopianism is more about play, and less earnest

and rational than previous assumptions about utopianism (Garforth, “No Intentions” 11).

Utopias can be read, then, not as solutions for a perfect construction of society but as spaces for working through the contradictions of the present one (Moylan, *Demand* 10).

This is particularly the case for what Moylan refers to as the “critical utopia”, a version of utopianism which arose in the 1960s and 1970s which reforms and ‘rescues’ the genre, by subverting the ‘harmonious and complete’ form of utopianism, while also critiquing present-day socio-political conditions (10).

Feminist utopianism, such as the works of Marge Piercy and Ursula Le Guin, are good examples of critical utopianism. In Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* (1975), the ‘ambiguously utopic’ planet of Anarres is anarchist, communal and ordered, yet the planet itself is no paradise of abundance, but dry and barren. Despite this, the majority of the Anarresti love their society and planet, and are disparaging of the abundant and capitalist planet Urras, from which their ancestors fled. Yet the protagonist, Shevek, a bright, young physicist, struggles to reconcile his individualistic tendencies and ambition with the utilitarian and community oriented culture. The novel depicts his journey to meet prestigious physicists on the planet Urras, where he encounters intellectual stimulation, great riches, abundance and natural resources, but also a poverty-stricken underclass, a state monopoly on violence and police brutality thwarting attempts at revolution. Le Guin thus critiques ‘utopia’ by, at times blurring the distinction between ‘utopia’ and ‘dystopia’, and depicting the co-existence both ‘utopic’ and ‘dystopic’ strands on each planet. Thus critical utopias, as in *The Dispossessed*, critique both the society from which they emerge and the view of utopia as static, harmonious and complete, while still retaining the element of hope for a better world (Moylan, *Demand* 10). The blueprint, or end-state utopia is rejected in order to focus on the *process* of social change, including difference and imperfection in the proposed utopia (10).

Another way of telling the story of utopia, is that traditionally, utopian theory, literature and the lay understanding of utopianism, focussed on utopias which clearly present a rationalist and controlling society, and then defined 'utopianism' as inevitably rationalist and totalitarian. Such perspectives construct utopianism as reliant on a 'utopian logic' of unity, harmony, self-consistency, a strict boundary between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic', stable, self-contained, separate from dystopia, 'elsewhere' and apart from its historical moment (Burwell 1). Yet these fictional and actual utopias of control, rationality and hierarchy may reflect particular patriarchal values which feminist writing and theory rejects, and defining the entire genre or phenomenon according to these characteristics is androcentric. That is, tautologically, the ways in which past scholars (of a male majority) have tried to define utopianism are those which emphasise rationality, clarity, dominance and authority. For example, Walsh limits his study of utopias to texts which deliberately present a clear and plausible society which is either superior or inferior to the one known by the reader and author (Walsh 27).

Seeking to remedy such oversights, scholars such as Sargisson and Burwell have developed utopian theories in ways which do not exclude women's work. For example, according to Sargisson, contemporary utopian theory which focuses more on *function* than form and content is more appropriate for examining feminist fiction and discourse (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 54).¹ While traditional utopian texts often re-imagine social structure, feminist utopian fiction provides a space in which women's roles and relationships are imagined differently, and in ways which are seen as complementary, or

¹ In saying that, scholars such as Pohl, Tooley and Johns have uncovered a large number of 'traditional' utopian texts written by women, including ones which predate More's such as Christine de Pisan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405) (Pohl and Tooley 3; Johns 27) so it is not the 'traditional' view of utopianism alone that has accounted for the previous systematic exclusion of women's work from the utopian canon.

analogous to feminist theory. In Silvergleid's view, feminist utopian fiction provides a site at which to "work through dilemmas about embodiment that feminist political theory has yet to resolve" (160). These dilemmas are approached in a range of ways, including separatism, anarchism, or by the recreation of language.

According to Baccolini, feminist utopian writing often challenges the traditionally oppositional nature of the utopian genre by deconstructing, subverting and opposing hegemonic ideology ("Finding Utopia in Dystopia" 163). As Cixous' claims "because women exist uneasily within the symbolic order, they possess the potential to escape the totalizing logic of that order and to discover a transformed existence and language that is immanent to their association with excess and multiplicity" (Burwell 31). In fact, feminist utopian writing also challenges the very concept of 'genre' and shows how genre, like psychology, acts as an institution to regulate what is 'normal' and 'deviant', with works and practices by women usually seen as deviant and inferior (Baccolini 164). In the spirit of subverting genre, of rejecting dichotomies, of creativity and transformation, feminist utopian fiction and feminist theory are often folded into each other, and at times indistinguishable (Silvergleid 160).

Feminist utopianism understood as depicting or exploring shifts in consciousness can also describe the processes of feminist thought. This might involve challenging critical thinking to include parts of consciousness often excluded from scholarly work such as affect and utopianism. Feminist theory and feminist utopian literature alike take more critical views of rationality as the correct route to knowledge, and explore consciousness and other ways of knowing and experiencing, opening up space in which to create new understandings not accessible to the rationalist mind (Fancourt 95).

According to Baum and Burwell, a common characteristic of women's utopianism, is its emphasis on interior states, such as psychology, language and embodiment (Burwell 84; Baum 266). This interest in 'interior' or psychological states is politically significant for feminist theory given that 'madness' in women's utopian writing might be seen as a way of exploring madness as resistance or challenge to a rationalist and patriarchal world.

According to Komar, "the textual space allows women writers to create new psychological shapes that displace the hierarchical patriarchal structures in favour of relationship, communality and interiority" (qtd. in Fancourt 95). For example, the ability of Connie in *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Piercy) to time-travel through an altered state of consciousness, no doubt would be interpreted as a symptom of her madness by medical professionals. As this novel illustrates, and as scholars such as Fancourt argue, the line between utopianism and madness is a fine one (95). In this way, and as Sargisson claims, reading feminist utopian texts is not just about 'consciousness *raising*', but 'consciousness' *changing*: the desire to alter, change or explore 'consciousness' itself. Reading such novels requires a "paradigm shift in consciousness" (*Contemporary* 229; Wagner-Lawlor 187). That is, feminist utopian novels often depict, and require, a shift in thinking, of experiencing and interpreting the world through what we call the mind, and of what immaterial and material things might be possible if this 'consciousness' is experienced differently.

As Le Guin insists, there are ways beyond 'rational' modes of thinking and traditional binaries especially. A number of theorists argue that 'otherness' is crucial to utopian thinking, because it attempts to imagine what is utterly different. Jameson claims that "utopian form is itself a representational meditation on radical difference, radical otherness, and on the systemic nature of the social totality" (*Archaeologies* xii). This is particularly significant in the context of postmodernism, or postmodern theory. Postmodern desire is

‘free-floating’, an end in itself, and this free-floating desire for something other in postmodern culture, is utopian (Garforth, “No Intentions” 24). Utopianism might therefore be seen to hold significance for postmodern theory, and for political theories which grapple with identity/difference, such as feminism (this will be discussed shortly). In fact Jameson argues that the “fundamental dynamic of any utopian politics...will therefore always lie in the dialectic of Identity and Difference” (*Archaeologies* xii). Utopianism as playful, experimental, political, hopeful and transformative can be a mode of critical and creative thinking towards alterity.

The Utopian Impulse: Beyond the Utopian Novel

While the study of utopianism has its roots in literary studies, current utopian theory expands beyond this form. Consistent with a general trend in literary theory away from a preoccupation with determining authorial intentions, and towards deconstructing systems of signification and semiotics (Garforth, “No Intentions” 18), since the 1980s utopian studies has been more interested in critiquing dominant ideologies than in the actual content of utopian texts. Social, cultural and critical theory can productively engage with utopianism in a similar way. Politically, this is necessary, as being more explicit about what kinds of world-making is occurring connects academic work in feminism and anarchism to social and political movements of which they may consider themselves a part. According to Bookchin “utopian dialogue in all its existentiality must infuse the abstractions of social theory” and this happens not via utopic ‘blueprints’ which are as oppressive and constraining and static as governmental plans, “but with the dialogue itself as a public event” (qtd. in Moylan, *Demand* 198). Given the ways in which dominant ideologies such as capitalism co-opt

utopianism (Moylan, *Demand* 15), for discourses seeking to enact change in the world reclaiming utopianism might be a productive endeavour. As Sargent puts it, in political and economic discourse there is a current reversion to utopias based on exclusion which are experienced as dystopian for most people (“In Defense” 13). That is, the arguably ‘utopian’ visions of, say, Donald Trump (“make America great again”), appear dystopic to those who experience, or fear, Trump’s utopia as closed, racist, sexist, class-based, transphobic and homophobic—a dystopia for the majority. Rather than rejecting utopianism, this makes it as important as ever to imagine alternatives. As feminist utopian theorists such as Wagner-Lawlor argue, imagination is both politically viable and politically necessary (Wagner-Lawlor 3). The concept and practice of utopianism is pertinent here because “without ‘utopia,’ without the possibility of negating an order beyond the point that we are to threaten it, there is no possibility at all of the constitution of a radical imaginary” (qtd. in el-Ojeii 244). This means both using utopianism as a vehicle for critique of the kinds of worlds brought about by dominant ideologies, as well as seeking and putting forwards alternatives.

Utopianism has been posited as a strategy for critical discourses which seek to bring about social and cultural change. For example, utopianism might be used as a method to critique dominant discourses by foregrounding and examining moments of utopianism, while also suggesting alternatives. Literary utopias *both* reflect and reimagine current social, cultural and political concerns, *and* try to imagine an alternative. They are both critique and imagination. Theory can use these functions in a similar way. For example, Ruth Levitas’ ‘utopia as method’ or ‘the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society (IROS)’ uses utopianism as a means of both revealing or making explicit the implied utopian ideals in existing political programmes and discourses, *and* trying to imagine alternatives while considering what kinds of societies promote or impede such alternatives (Levitas, *Utopia* xi). Clearly, this is much

like utopian fiction and utopian theory, so, as Levitas points out, it is not a 'new' method as such, but rather a way of identifying and emphasising how the utopian mode functions as speculative sociology (153).

While it can be difficult to locate fully-fledged, 'end-state' utopias, a broader view of utopianism as any kind of impulse of hope for the 'not-yet' finds utopia lurking everywhere (Bloch 45). Empirical science, policy, economics and other such rationalist discourses, for example, can be understood as kinds of utopian discourses. Roy Stager Jacques proposes the term "crypto-utopianism" for making sense of "any forms of thought and practice which treats perception, value and/or belief as hard reality" (29). These discourses propose models and constructions of reality which differ only from what we call 'fiction' in that they imagine their ideals and models of the world to be 'true' (Jacques 29). For example, 'light green' or mainstream environmentalism often advocates for technological and scientific 'solutions' to environmental problems constructing the environment as a problem to be solved by the market. This can be understood as a utopian wish for a society which is both infinitely growing and developing, while causing no adverse environmental effects for those humans who profit from constant capitalist growth and advancement of its empire.

Viewing dominant discourses usually taken to be, or presented as, 'fact' as instead 'crypto-utopic', both strips them of their authority over the 'utopic' discourses of feminism and anarchism, and reveals the ways in which such ideas are utopic in the unrealistic sense, because they do not understand themselves as utopic. As Jacques explains, "the crypto-utopia, then, is a form of idealized vision of the world that pretends not to be a vision at all" (31). Jacques gives such examples as George Bush (I)'s constructions of the Gulf War as a fight for American freedom, and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as a utopian treatise (31). Both are concerned with ideals, and both also construct a particular model of reality. This criticism

can also be extended to current dominant discourses which cling to the “crypto-utopian assumption that we are Realists, that we operate without visions” (31). Yet what Jacques calls the paradox and danger of Modernity and the American dream is “the dream that we are not dreamers; the ideology that we are not ideological; the blind faith that Reality is empirical” (31). It is ‘utopian’ to deny one’s utopianism, as it is ideological to assume that one holds no ideologies and can use the term as insult or criticism. Like ideology, to not be utopian, as many realist or scientists for example would claim, simply means that one’s utopianism aligns with dominant cultural discourses which hold a monopoly over claims about ‘reality’. These utopianisms become invisible.

Neoliberalism and capitalism, for example, suggest certain kinds of utopias, such as visions of complete individual autonomy and a surplus of high-paying jobs which people simply need to make personal effort to attain (Scott-Samuel and Smith 6). In proudly democratic western societies such as Aotearoa New Zealand, hierarchies, competition and authority are considered normal and desirable throughout academia, government and business, despite neoliberal claims to reduce state power and leave individuals and communities to determine their own fates. In western societies, values of freedom, equality and fairness are claimed to be protected and upheld, and yet there appear to be conflicting ideas about what these mean. If we live in an equal and fair society how can we explain “poor life outcomes”, gaps in pay, and how is hierarchy explained at all? By neoliberal logic, such hardship or luck is the responsibility of the individual, because the ideal neoliberal subject is the “entrepreneurial self” who is “expected to live life in a prudent, calculating way, and to be ever-vigilant of risks” (Petersen and Lupton xiii). Revealing this to be a particular kind of utopian thinking, and a narrow and prescriptive one at that, shows how

political discourses must construct particular stories and fantasies in order to sustain themselves, and this can allow utopian critics to suggest that other narratives are possible.

Constructions or interpretations of gender might also be read as utopian discourses: assertions or ideals for how human bodies and subjectivities *should* be. These do not *necessarily* reflect material and experiential realities, and yet, nonetheless strongly shape these realities. As queer theorists note, western culture and societies are constructed around the assumption that everyone is cis-gendered, one of two genders and heterosexual. This serves to silence and regulate those who do not fit these models. Spade argues that “the medical approach to our gender identities forces us to rigidly conform ourselves to medical providers’ opinions about what “real masculinity” and “real femininity” mean” which “can be dehumanizing, traumatic, or impossible to complete” (Spade 28-29). The medical establishment ascribes to, and enforces, a two-sex model, in which sex is determined based on chromosomes, reproductive role and the appearance of genitalia (Fausto-Sterling 3). That at birth infants who do not meet the medical criteria for ‘male’ or female are surgically altered to conform to one set of these criteria (Fausto-Sterling 5), and that gender nonconformity is a basis for illness (Spade 25), speaks to the utopianism or idealism inherent in the two-sex model of gender. Further, people who are transgendered and wish to transition, must be diagnosed as ‘suffering’ from a psychological disorder—Gender Identity Disorder, a diagnosis that requires that they conform to stereotypes of the gender to which they wish to transition. In other words, a binary system is enforced on those who try to escape or subvert it (24). The medical model, and society at large, appears to wish for, and actively construct, a world in which people can be neatly divided into two categories. This might be read along lines of “crypto-utopianism”—a utopian story which pretends not to be a utopia at all, and yet it is as totalitarian, violent and shaping of actual

human bodies as fictional dystopias such as *We* (Zamyatin) or *1984* (Orwell) or *Brave New World* (Huxley).

Colonisation is another poignant example of how utopianism crosses the boundary between fiction and real life. Utopia has played a role in both colonisation and postcolonisation (Sargent, *Utopianism* 7), in fact, so concerned were classical utopias with colonisation that they read as a blend of both explorer- narratives and fiction, and writers and thinkers used these 'new' worlds as a canvas on which to project their ideals (Pohl 3). The 'New World' of the Americas, for example, was viewed as the promised and idealised land (Moylan, *Demand* 4) where amazing riches, cities of gold, the Garden of Eden and the fountain of youth may be found (Kitch 23). Kitch argues that this utopic thinking has shaped American culture and remains at its core to this day, more recently manifesting in real estate discourses and its continuing promise to hopeful immigrants (23).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, a bicultural nation, there are (at least) 'two realities' of place. Matunga invites us to

Imagine a Ngai Tahu woman in Christchurch, walking up Colombo Street, avoiding the traffic, oblivious to the people around her, striding determinedly past the Christchurch Cathedral. She walks up Hereford Street and then rests by the Otakaroro (Avon River) where her ancestors caught tuna, and where tourists now pay to go punting. Rested, she follows the banks of the river through Victoria Square, past the Town Hall to Otautahi (originally a kainga near the Kilmore Street Fire Station). She then walks up to Papanui, where her ancestors for centuries extracted syrup from the ti or cabbage tree (Tau 2000). She traverses the same path that her ancestors traveled over one hundred and fifty years earlier, temporally separated,

but spatially linked. Multiply this story a thousand times across all the cities in Aotearoa and one gets a fuller sense of the two histories, and two realities that permeate our cities. One dominating, the other dominated. (Matunga 66)

The 'reading' of a city, place or landscape, is always situated-- there is always more than one reality in the present, as well as multiple ideals. Pakeha versions dominate Māori perspectives, histories of, and relationships to place, but contrary to the story many Pakeha believe, Matunga explains that all cities in New Zealand were built on tangata whenua spaces (66). These places over time became interlinked "with the stories histories and experiences of iwi (tribes) hapu (subtribes) and whanau (extended families)" (66). Matunga shows us a dual understanding of place: "what might now be a pleasant suburban street lined with oak trees in Remuera, may have been the site of a battle, the location of the newest MacDonalds Restaurant in Otara - an important resting place of rangatira (chiefs), Christchurch's central business district, an occupation site or kainga" (66). Ideology is always inherent in any kind of 'world-making', and this is not a practice of fiction or fantasy, but of the 'real' world.

Reading technologies and technological discourses in utopian terms also demonstrates the kinds of worlds those with the means are in the process of reinforcing or trying to bring about. For example Strengers interprets 'smart technologies' as both embodying utopian ideals found in past fiction or future speculation, *and* for the new ways of life they seem to suggest through their use in the present (2, 8). This way of life and its ideals cohere with humanistic values of rationality, masculinity, self, efficiency and control, with function privileged over process (2). Taking the equation of 'goodness and rationality' and 'abundance and rationality' to heart, these gadgets and their 'smart' users, are based

on the assumption that humans are rational, calculating actors making ‘good’ (rational and predictable) choices—this view is at the core of the “smart utopia” (2). This coheres with neoliberal ideals of people as self-managing, self-optimizing, dependent on the market, yet independent from the care and needs of other people. This is so taken for granted that, as Strengers notes, while there is much research concerned with evaluating and estimating the costs and benefits of smart technology, there is very little research which asks about the vision itself—what is hoped for and who it involves (8).

The kinds of utopias promised by the appearance of particular technologies is of course entirely dependent on social and political conditions—on power. The internet can be viewed as utopic, an even potentially anarchistic, but the utopias associated with it seem to vary from infinite and democratic sharing, to unprecedented surveillance and isolation of individuals. Jameson has said that the renewed interest in utopianism of the 1960s, sadly just missed the “cybernetic age” and therefore these “new and properly utopian resources” have never been utilised for utopian purposes (“Antimonies” 26). Jameson’s view is that “the principal result so far seems less to have produced new visions of social organisation and of social relations than to have rendered anachronistic and insipid the other industrial notions of non-alienated labour as such” (26). Utopian hopes, such as full employment or the end of work through advanced technology, or feeding the whole world by improved agricultural science and technologies, will not bring about utopia, but rather we would need a radically different system which does not *rely* on unemployment and starvation in the first place. This, suffice to say, is the domain of feminist, anarchist, socialist and environmentalist critical theory.

Recognising a fictionality in the way dominant discourses construct the present interrupts its seamlessness and makes the imagining of alternatives more viable. Yet

regardless of how ‘fictional’, these constructions or interpretations of subjectivity, gender, or the commodification of human relations may be, they are nonetheless experienced as very real. The utopianisms or ‘fictions’ of capitalism has real effects on people through things like impoverishment and denial of real needs like food, safety, shelter, water. The fictions which construct people into two gender categories, or hold that women and non-binary people are inferior to men, have real life effects in the form of violence, exclusion and erasure. Perhaps even more ‘deeply’, these fictions have such ‘real’ effects, that they shape identities and subjectivities to the extent that they come to be experienced as individual choices or truths (Gill, “Culture and Subjectivity” 436). Understanding these as fictions or utopian makes them available for critique, and points to an optimistic malleability of social and cultural reality—changing experiential and material outcomes by changing discourses which act and have effects in the world.

It is important to understand that utopia as a method and theoretical framework, is *both* diagnostic (a way of understanding the present) and a way of making change. As Moylan interprets Levitas’ work on utopia as method, utopia functions as a “*diagnostic* hermeneutic” but equally as a way of “generating the historical break and *constructive* change that aims explicitly at the ‘instauration of concrete utopia’” (Moylan, “Further Reflections” 8). To put it simply, critical theories and resistant discourses or movements are both ‘for’ and ‘against’ various modes of being in, understanding the world, and relating to each other. Reading dominant and resistant discourses alike as ‘utopian’ shifts the focus from what is ‘true’ (in a postmodern situation in which multiple ‘truths’ might be now accepted), to what ‘ends’ such discursive ways of constructing social, cultural and natural realities might bring about. Once the indisputable becomes ‘utopic’ it also becomes available for critique and discussion. As Jameson points out, “the effectively ideological is

also, at the same time, necessarily utopian” (qtd. in Moylan, *Demand* 19). Taking utopianism seriously, these utopias can be evaluated in terms of *whose* freedom and happiness they are working towards; *who* is speaking; *to whom* they are speaking and *whose interests* they are really serving. In other words, utopianism used in this way reveals that theories always imply value positions, and that theorising is a ‘real world’ activity which always already presents an assumed ‘good’. This is not a reason to attempt to be more ‘neutral’ or objective, and that theories and discourses are utopian is not a criticism. Rather, this is a reason to assume responsibility for theories and consider carefully the worlds they suggest or work towards, and who these serve. This *can* be interrogated and critiqued.

Critical discourses such as anarchism, feminism and environmentalism or ecopolitical thought might be read as always already utopian. Beilharz goes so far as to claim that “it would be difficult to imagine a political or social theory that lacked any utopian trace, that was bereft of images of the good society” (qtd. in el-Ojeili 244). In this sense, critical theories, like dominant discourses, might be read *as* utopian texts. For example, while diverse, contradictory, fragmented, Ahmed suggests that “what feminists share is a concern with the future; that is, a desire that the future should not simply be a repetition of the past; given that feminism comes into being as a critique of, and resistance to, the ways in which the world has already taken shape” (236). Similarly, it might be said that what feminism, anarchism and environmentalism among other critical discourses all share is a concern that the future is not simply a repetition of past mistakes. As Ahmed points out, “being against something is also about being for something but something that has yet to be articulated or is not yet” (247). Utopian and critical theories seek to examine and explore some of these concerns.

Yet critical theories and movements such as socialism, Marxism, anarchism, feminism and environmentalism have had a contradictory relationship with utopianism. Marx and Engels, for example, both acknowledged the influence of the utopian socialists (Cabet, Saint Simon, Weitling, Fourier, Owen) who they “praised for their imaginative construction of a new world and their relentless critique of the old” yet also ridiculed them for their detailed plans and earnestness (el-Ojeili 243). Marxist scholars (and Karl Marx himself) have also been disparaging of utopianism, although as Burwell ironically remarks, Marxist “characteristic contempt for utopian literature is equalled only by their sense of ownership of the genre” (Burwell x). That is, many Marxists, especially Marx himself, have been disparaging of utopianism, yet utopianism as the desire for a better way of living together has been influenced by, and influences, Marxism in literary, political and theoretical forms. As I am arguing, any Marxist, anarchist, environmentalist or feminist desire for a different society always and necessarily involves some utopianism.

Again it would seem that rejections or criticisms of utopianism are grounded in an assumption of utopianism as a ‘perfect state’ which is dangerously essentialist-- a flat, grand narrative which rejects individual differences in favour of a totalizing, social harmony (Burwell 2; Pohl and Tooley 4). Allen, for example, rejects utopianism, and declares the double function of criticality and vision enacted by feminist theories to be a “looming paradox” in feminist and critical theory, because, she argues, to be both critical and utopically emancipatory at once is contradictory (513). If, following Foucault, we believe that there is no outside to power, then there is no possibility for a subject to exist outside of power relations and for “genuine” (“utopian”) emancipation (515). Allen’s resolution is to rethink our understanding of emancipation along lines which are not reliant upon a vision of a “power free utopia” (515). Allen assumes, then, that utopia is, by definition, power free

and seeks to modify the notion of emancipation through theorising “something like a model of emancipation without utopia” (518). When utopianism is read as oriented towards perfection above all else, it ceases to be a useful concept for critical theories and social movements.

This means that critical theories which embrace utopianism are engaged in both resisting the tendency towards perfection, completion and authoritative rationality, while also trying to retain the transformative and hopeful aspects of utopianism. el-Ojeili argues that it is necessary to be at once sceptical of the traditional utopian dream of final closure, static, perfect harmony while also daring to dream of a better life away from institutions such as state and capital which are increasingly more difficult to question (247). That is, following Laclau and Mouffe el-Ojeili contends that “each radical emancipatory project must seek a path between the coercive myth of the Ideal City and the positivist pragmatism of a reformism without a project” (247). There is, in other words, a space between total control and directionless-ness that social critical discourses must tread, and, as I will argue, anarchism, feminism and ecopolitical thought might provide one such path. This is the work of critical utopianism (Moylan, *Demand* 40).

That critical theories are also utopian is a particularly reflexive point in relation to feminist utopianism. By feminist utopianism I mean to refer both to fiction and theory together, without presupposing a one-way dialogue in which one is an object to be explained and validated by an expert. This is consistent with feminist utopianism as, subverting genre and traditional distinctions, feminist utopian fiction and feminist theory are often folded into each other, to be at times indistinguishable (Silbergleid 160). That is, feminist theorists and philosophers might be read as utopian for their wish for a different

social order, their efforts to reimagine language, theorising or everyday life, and their yearning for what is 'not yet', but *could* be. Further, "utopias present theory as fiction and *vice versa*" (Sargisson, "What's Wrong" 53). As Silbergleid also argues, feminist utopian fiction can be considered 'theoretical' in that it has been a space where politics are imagined differently, a site for "working through dilemmas about embodiment that feminist political theory has yet to resolve" (160).

Critical theories, such as feminism, are clearly well developed in the 'critical' aspect of utopianism. However the imaginative and creative part is equally important. As Pohl and Tooley put it, "the answer to women's political and social impotence is fancy and imagination—the very fabric of utopia" (9). Sargisson argues that in order to manage a growing consciousness of differences between and among women which seems to undermine the possibility of solidarity and the legitimacy of feminism's very existence (*Contemporary* 72), feminism would do well to seek theories and practices which offer something different, transgresses binary oppositions such as 'identity/difference', and Sargisson believes that utopian spaces may offer this (72). Some feminist theorists are already engaged in such work (Braidotti and Grosz, for example) undermining binaries and destabilising theory in ways which Sargisson claims is "profoundly utopian" (Sargisson 76). Sargisson suggests that contemporary feminist thought is creating a new kind of utopianism which "forces the field of political theory on to new ground: utopian thought journeys into uncharted and unfamiliar territory, and creates spaces in which visions of the good can be imagined" and undermines both the concepts of utopianism and of theoretical conceptualisation itself (5).

Irigaray, for example, can be read as utopian, 'going beyond' both liberal and radical feminism into a 'nowhere', or a more positive place (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 77). Although often charged with 'essentialism', "Irigaray's theoretical and political project is centrally concerned with the possibilities of developing non-dominative, non-appropriative, and transformative ways of living and being and becoming in the world" (McManus). As a radical feminist, Irigaray seeks to theorize new ways of being and speaking as women through paying attention to female anatomy and embodied experience, while also critiquing the assumed universalism of androcentric ways of being (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 81). This means that she emphasises, or values, sexual *difference*, rather than gender equality in the sense of sameness. Specifically, Irigaray critiques patriarchy through her vision that human life and society is rooted not in one common humanity, but in *two*. Although this can appear binaristic, Irigaray seems to reimagine this difference of twoness, not as reliant on a dichotomy, but on a plurality of differences which are interdependent rather than segregated (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 77). The point here, is not on the dichotomous construction of gender, but on the concept of gender *difference* as opposed to sameness which can mean assimilating all genders to an androcentric norm.

Whether or not one agrees with Irigaray, her theorising can be viewed as utopian even to the point of 'world-making', or acknowledging the different 'worlds' already inherent in the present. This mention of "worlds" is even quite explicit. For example, that "the customs of the maternal world are generally ruled by proximity, but a proximity unthought as such. The patriarchal world, on the other hand, is based on property, but the proper of man remains foreign to it" (Irigaray and Pluhacek 18). That is, there is no 'proper' construction of man and masculinity in terms of sexual difference, the only identity offered to man is one which relies on dominance, property and 'othering' of woman. In contrast,

the maternal world knows itself, and its subjects are within it: relations are to do with proximity, rather than ownership. If women are *in* the world already, then there is no need to justify feminine existence and connection to the world through a relation of property. Further, this might be read not just as a statement about sexual difference, but, as a way of ‘doing’ utopianism with this sexual difference in mind. That is, a possibly ‘feminine’ or ‘feminist’ way of doing utopianism. Irigaray seems to suggest that, unlike ‘man’, women are *in* the world and part of it, rather than outsiders looking down on an object. Traditionally utopianism has relied on an inside/outside dichotomy with ‘in’ being the ‘good place’ (or in dystopias, the bad place), and the author being situated ‘outside’ of this world and time. Instead, Irigaray does not seek estrangement by separating herself and the world, and yet still imagines or reaches towards other ways of being in the world, and for culture and society to be. This is a version of utopianism which is immanent, rather than transcendent and imaginary, and, as I will argue, appears also in anarchist discourse and praxis (Chapter Two).

Anarchism, with its focus on process and action, shares much in common with feminist utopianism, or other function and process oriented version of utopianism. Both are also concerned with immanence. Like the utopian impulse which exists in all kinds of thought and hope throughout society, anarchism holds that, rather than needing to wait until ‘after’ the revolution (like Marxists), anarchism is always already there, but is oppressed by the State. In the 21st century, anarchists, along with feminists, have been the “heart and soul” of many social movements such as Occupy (Hammond 288), the Arab Spring and what is broadly termed the “Global Justice Movement” (Maiguashca 79). As I will argue in subsequent chapters (Three and Five in particular), anarchism might be particularly

suited to the conditions of postmodernism and be capable of making sense of a utopianism for this era.

According to Reedy, “utopianism is at the centre of anarchism” (178). These utopian visions for a future society barely need ‘excavation’ (Levitas, *Utopia* xvii, 154) at all: they were never buried in the first place. Anarchists such as Emma Goldman imagined that “a free society can exist only through voluntary association, and that its ultimate success will depend upon the intellectual and moral development of the workers who will supplant the wage system with a new social arrangement, based on solidarity and economic well-being for all” (Goldman 5). More overtly Samuel Clark calls his exploration of possible anarchist societies, an exercise in “practical utopianism” arguing that “an anarchist utopia is within the bounds of social possibility. We really could live together peacefully and prosperously without domination” (Clark 1). Clark envisions an anarchist utopia as consisting of

multiple interwoven networks of social humans pursuing the huge variety of interests, from the most basic in making a living to the most subtle in art, science and communication. There is no domination within or between these networks. Coordination between individuals and networks is achieved, not by an attempt to unify them into a single territorial hierarchy, but by federisation and agreement. Conflict is not absent, but is limited and resolved by mediation and negotiation (Clark 23).

This is a vision for a society in which individual and communal tendencies uphold each other and are of equal importance. Like feminism and many utopias, anarchism refuses the choice between individualism and communalism. While the visions of society anarchists have

imagined and sought to bring into being are diverse, generally, according to Ritter, they seek to combine “the greatest individual development with the greatest communal unity” (qtd. in Clark 6). Seemingly current western culture does not seem to provide readily available understandings of how we can think of ourselves, and live, as at once individuals and also part of each other, preferring instead individualistic accounts. A utopian approach may enable another kind of critique and recreation of the dichotomous binds in which we so frequently find ourselves. Similarly for Reedy, an anarchist utopia would draw on the model of federalism, and so disparate utopias like Cockayne, Arcadia and the Ideal City could all be included (81). That is, there would be no singular, perfect nation-state or idyllic village, but multiple anarchist communities with different ways of living could co-exist, provided these respected the autonomy of each, and co-ordinated and co-operated on all matters which affected them (much like in the anarchist utopia in Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time*).

Bio-centric discourses, deep ecology, environmentalism and veganism share links with feminism, utopianism and anarchism. Ecocritical, ecopolitical and environmentalist thought and activism (and its many variations) can be read as raising probing questions regarding how humans live alongside nonhuman animals and as part of a larger ecological web. Given the environmental ‘challenges’ (to speak euphemistically) we increasingly face—such as a warming planet, rising sea levels, mass extinctions, nutrient deficits and other adverse effects of intensive agriculture—the utopianisms of these discourses are not self-indulgent but urgent and pragmatic. Central to these ecocentric discourses are ideas about what the ‘good life’ (and the ‘bad life’) is (Luke xi), with utopian visions usually involving a more abundant, harmonious, peaceful, or at least less destructive existence in, or alongside, ‘nature’. Different ‘shades’ of environmental or ecocentric philosophies hold different views on what this means, and how this state of existence might be attained. Some argue that for

those who believe that different ways of living are possible, such as anarchists and feminists, there is an “ethical obligation to consult other species” (Jones 241), while others are concerned only with the extent to which the nonhuman physical environment threatens humanity through its changeability and (human influenced) failure, and future failure, to provide for human life. Some seek to ‘improve’ or reform capitalism through green technologies and science, while others see capitalism as inextricably linked to environmental destruction and exploitation and seek to, like anarchism, undermine capitalism. Despite many differences and contradictions in this body of thought, reoccurring questions include the morality of anthropocentrism compared to biocentrism, the ethics of eating and instrumentalising other forms of life, and how we might think and live differently without ‘radically altering’ the world in which we live to the point of self-destruction and elimination of nonhuman life forms. Garforth notes that

theorists of ecopolitical thought have begun to examine ecotopianism not simply in terms of the formal representation of green ideas, but in an attempt to identify the operations and function of utopia as part of the politics of contemporary ecology. While nature can be seen as part of the content of utopias, green political theory seeks to understand utopianism as an intrinsic aspect of radical ecology. Built on the tenets of ecocentrism, sufficiency and embeddedness, radical ecological thought can be seen as inherently utopian – that is, critical, disruptive and emancipatory. (Garforth, “Ideal Nature” 10).

This might be said to be true of all critical theories noted here. It is not just the ‘content’ and specific demands of feminism, anarchism or ecological thought, but rather how they

function as utopian texts or visions which carry hope and demand that things be different, and especially their function as disruptive and resistant.

In this chapter I have examined the ways in which the concepts of ‘utopia’ and ‘utopianism’ are constructed in utopian theory. Namely, this chapter has shown that utopianism has been used to conceptualise both ‘end state’ visions of order, control and perfection, *and* open-ended, hopeful and process-based visions. Dominant and critical discourses can alike be read in relation to these various forms of utopianism. While utopias *can* be totalitarian or authoritarian, and the utopianisms of dominant discourses such as colonisation, patriarchy, anthropocentrism and capitalism *are* oppressive, contemporary utopian theorists argue that utopianism is *also* the best way to resist these kinds of systems (Sargent, *Utopianism* 9). Therefore, as Sargent puts it, “it is not utopianism that is at fault, it is the insistence that a particular utopia is the only correct way of living that is the problem” (“In Defense” 13). The question, then, is not ‘whether’ utopic, but rather, *whose* utopia? In this chapter I have suggested that, taking utopianism broadly to refer both to assumptions about how the world ‘is’ (dominant discourses) and visions for alternative worlds (critical or resistant discourses), utopianism is a concept pertinent to critical discourses such as anarchism, environmentalism and feminism. In doing so, I have outlined some ways of reading critical and dominant discourses as utopian. In the next chapter I apply this way of reading to anarchist discourses and its feminist and eco-centric or eco-political variants in order to investigate the utopian characteristics of anarchism, and in turn, anarchist and feminist ways of conceptualising alternatives.

Chapter Two: Anarchism, Anarcha-feminism and Eco-Political Discourses as Critical Utopian Texts

As I have argued, utopianism is a political intervention, a process and a subversive act because it insists that other ways are possible in a system which actively quashes alternatives (Anderson, “Emergency Futures” 4; Buchanan 81; Cevalco 57; Fisher; McManus; Wright 2). Grassroots movements and activism, which are frequently anarchist (for example, the Occupy Movement (Hammond 288)), can be seen as utopian in this sense (Fournier 192). As Reedy writes, anarchists, with their “incurable fascination with attempts to both delineate and live out the good life” are arguably utopianists at heart (170) in the sense of utopianism as a practice of imagining improvement and challenging the status quo, and anarchist negation of current society always contains positive alternatives (Eckert 69; Reedy 178). In the previous chapter I briefly described how political and philosophical discourses such as feminism, anarchism and environmentalism could be read as utopian. This next chapter extends on this argument by offering a fuller picture of the ‘contents’ of these utopian visions, in particular a number of variations of anarchist theory. In this chapter I take a closer look at the discourses I am reading as critically utopian, explore some of the connections and disagreements between them, and almost self-reflexively, investigate how imaginative and academic work might be read in relation to ‘real world’ social and cultural change.

Anarchism

Anarchism is a radical discourse particularly concerned with strategies for undermining capitalism and envisioning and creating alternatives. Like utopianism, anarchism entails an insistence that life could be other than what it is, and faces similar charges of being unrealistic, too simple, too subversive or too rationalistic. Anarchism, if it is possible to speak broadly, rejects a way of life which is prescribed and imposed, and instead wishes for otherness and alterity, emphasising plurality, possibilities and process over perfectible blueprints in a way that aligns with critical utopianism (Fournier 201).

Advocating for principles of self-governance and communalism, anarchism represents an opposing alternative to the disempowerment, conformity and individualism of capitalism and neoliberalism (201). Although anarchist views are varied, most anarchists reject authority, hierarchy and domination, and promote the establishment of systems which are de-centralized and self-regulating, to which association is voluntary, where individuals are free and equal, and both co-operation and individual potential are upheld (Reedy 178).

Unlike Marxism, anarchism has not arisen out of a particular theoretical tradition at a particular time and there have probably *always* been anarchists throughout human history (Graeber, "Anarchism" 105). In saying that, anarchist theorists often draw on the works of 19th and 20th century anarchists such as Bakunin, Kropotkin, Proudhon (Kinna and Prichard 271-274) and Goldman (Jeppesen and Nazar 168). However, it is also important to make clear that there is no singular anarchism, but many different anarchisms including classical anarchism (and anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-communism within that), anarcho-feminism (Kornegger; Nazar and Jeppesen) queer anarchism (Heckert; Eckert), post(modern) anarchism (Eckert; Jun), natural anarchism (Jones) and eco-anarchism or anarcho-primitivism (Best and Nocella; Bookchin; Pepper; Zerzan). This chapter will involve examining the intertwining of anarchism, feminism and environmentalism, with further

chapters discussing aspects of queer anarchism and post(modern) anarchism, particularly in relation to theorising subjectivity.

In the 21st century, many global movements have been anarchist (Maiguashca 79). For example, Solnit writes of peace activism, which she describes as part of a global movement in the early 2000s in the US, as being without leaders, even though there were also multiple “brilliant spokespeople, theorists, and organisers” (23). Solnit cites African writer Laurens Van Der Post as saying that “no great new leaders were emerging because it was time for us to cease to be followers” (23). In this sense, anarchism might be particularly suited to the postmodern era and cultural discourses in which de-centralisation, plurality and fluidity feature large (Reedy 179). In a time of increased individualism, the end of grand narratives, and the normalisation of discourses of autonomy, perhaps the time for anarchism has come (again). From a more practical perspective, utopianism helps radical movements such as anarchism respond to the question ‘well what would you replace it with?’ (Reedy 186). It is generative of imaginative alternatives, while also inviting a critical eye to the ‘worlds’ imagined in such discourses.

Women, Anarchism and Anarcha-feminism

While feminist utopias and utopian thought shares many commonalities with anarchism, the links between these discourses are not always immediately apparent (Maiguaschca 79). Anarchism has been criticised for excluding women, and for framing gender, sexuality, identity and embodiment as distracting from the ‘main’ cause, rather than fundamental to it. Classical anarchism of the 19th and 20th centuries was mainly concerned with work, capital, religion and state at the expense of considering race, gender and

sexualities, and despite many common interests, in practice, anarchist groups in the twentieth century were not always feminist, in that they were not necessarily willing to confront and change the ways in which male anarchists dominated women in their own lives (Kornegger 31, Farrow 21, Kinna 3). Like Marxism, in general, anarchist theory and practice has been dominated by men (Gemie 417, Kurin 4, Kornegger 31) and as a result, gender and patriarchy are undertheorized in anarchist thought, and the movement has not really addressed the concerns of women (Gaarder 46, Ackelsberg 67). This may partly explain feminism's apparent disinterest in anarchism.

Yet to say that anarchism is an inherently masculine movement, and to associate it with male violence, destruction and individualism is questionable (anarchist feminist utopian fiction, as I will explore in the next chapter, is a case and point). Contrary to academic and popular representations, women have been involved with the anarchist movement from at least the late 19th century, and the view that anarchism is, and has been, a male movement may be itself an androcentric one reinforces men as the centre of the anarchist movement (Jeppesen and Nazar 168). Jeppesen and Nazar point out that many influential activists of classical anarchism were in fact women (most famously, Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre and Louise Michel) and speculate that other women anarchists may have disappeared from historical record because they were less likely to appear in the police records often used to inform research (168). Women have always been present in anarchist groups and movements, and yet this is not to say that anarchism has somehow remained 'outside' of patriarchy. Rather, women in anarchist movements have been tasked with confronting gender oppression within these groups and discourses.

Anarcha-feminism is a response to such male domination and the suppression and abuse of women within anarchist movements. In other words, it explicitly extends a critique of domination to include the ways in which men dominate women, including within anarchist movements (Kornegger 31). This is sometimes a point of tension between anarchist feminists and anarchists as, while anarchists have traditionally seen gender oppression as resulting from the state, religion or corporations, feminist anarchists hold that gender oppression is not dependent on the same structures which oppress men and workers, and that women's concerns must be specifically addressed and gender relations transformed if anarchism is to be more fully actualized (Gaarder 48). This fills an important gap in anarchist practice and theory, for if anarchism seeks to end *all* domination, then an understanding of what domination 'is' must extend beyond that of class and government. This might also include considerations of other species and the nonhuman environment as will be examined shortly.

From a theoretical perspective then, as Ackelsberg claims, anarcha-feminism offers an analytical model capable of accommodating multiple relationships of domination and subordination without insisting that one is more fundamental than any other (qtd. in Gaarder 47). Consistent with other forms of intersectional feminisms, anarcha-feminism calls anarchists to consider issues usually deemed 'women's issues' such as sexuality, gender, the body, reproduction, parenting and alternatives beyond the patriarchal nuclear family (Jeppesen and Nazar 163). This is also entirely congruent with anarchist thought because, for both feminists and anarchists, context, lived experience, the here and now, the combining of theory and practice, personal and political are paramount (Ehrlich 7). To this end issues relating to intimacy, family, sexuality, the body and identity are unquestionably relevant to anarchism (168). Further, questioning society at this level is crucial because

successful opposition to capitalism by everyday people might mean opposing capitalist patriarchy in those small events where it intersects with our lives, “singular points where they occur” as Guattari theorized (Fournier 207).

Anarcha-feminism brings feminism to anarchism, but it also brings much needed critique to feminism. While mainstream feminism has provided powerful counter discourses to patriarchy, and improved the lives of white middle-upper class women, it has not (yet) successfully undermined patriarchal capitalism, and in some ways, may be reabsorbed, tolerated or even used to maintain these structures, both internal and external to the movement. As transfeminists, black feminists and Māori women of the Mana Wahine movement point out, ‘mainstream’ feminism, particularly second wave feminism, tended to ignore class, race, non-binary genders, religion, culture, age and ability in favour of ‘unity’ and ‘the larger cause’. This has led to hierarchies within feminism with the interests of those for whom being a woman is their only source of oppression being privileged above those who are marginalised, labelled or oppressed in multiple ways (Rogue 2).

Often, feminist reinforcement of hierarchy has been deliberate. First wave and liberal feminism has tended to work with or *within* the boundaries of the state, seeking to include women in these, rather than overthrow such institutions altogether. Much mainstream feminism today frequently revolves around representation in government and management, increasing pay and encouraging women into more prestigious science and technology related jobs so that women can exploit power and capital, rather than abolish it. This limits feminism itself because, without sufficient class analysis, it can, and has, been co-opted into reinforcing neoliberalism, capitalism and representative politics, which continue to oppress most women, as I will argue in the final chapter of Part One.

Contrary to this, anarcha-feminists do not believe that the placement of women, or more 'diverse' women, in powerful or authoritarian positions will end oppression (Ehrlich 6). As Emma Goldman pointed out in the 19th century, granting women the right to own property and to vote is a woefully inadequate response to gender oppression which does little for the majority of women wage workers living paycheck to paycheck who are prevented from a right to land by capitalism and colonisation (Goldman, *Anarchism* 81). In a similar vein, as Kornegger puts it, "feminism doesn't mean female corporate power or a woman president; it means *no* corporate power and *no* presidents!" (12). The right to be included in the wage system, electoral politics and other hierarchies has not, and will not, end patriarchy, because it is inextricably linked with authority, domination and capitalism. To this end, like anarchists, anarcha-feminists are interested in tackling authority and domination itself as the cause of inequality and oppression, rather than the ways in which gender oppression manifests. Ending domination will end inequality, but a more equal distribution of power and resources, or the disappearance of certain stereotypes, will not necessarily end domination, thus creating a self-perpetuating cycle of oppression and inequality (Leeder 2). Anarcha-feminism seeks radical utopian change which involves drawing from and critiquing both classical anarchism and mainstream feminism.

Anarchism and Nonhuman Natures

Ending all domination might also be extended to include the ways in which humans relate to nonhuman animals and nature (Best and Nocella 23). Linking anarchism and ecologism or environmentalism might produce a more powerful critique of capitalism and patriarchy, while also providing more detailed visions of how we might live because part of

everyday living must involve participation in an eco-system (Pepper 64). Murray Bookchin believes that human-human domination *preceded* human-nature domination, and so ending the former through anarchist revolution will solve environmental problems associated with the latter (Hall 380). Drawing on Bookchin's anarchism, along with Marx, Pepper argues that 'environmental' movements are always also socialist movements. That is, many environmental movements are concerned with preserving, protecting or restoring the environment in order to meet the basic needs of living (Pepper 64), and society and environment cannot be easily separated.

There are other continuities between a number of social justice movements and eco-centrism. Anarchists, eco-feminists, radical/revolutionary environmentalists, green/anarcho-primitivists and natural anarchists all agree that the capitalist system of production and social organisation is exploitative and environmentally destructive. In this sense, they are in agreement with many anarchists, Marxists, socialists and radical feminists. As Jones notes, the concept of property for example, which anarchists often resist, involves violence towards nonhuman nature as well as humans: that is, the only way to possess or turn land into property is by physically keeping out humans, rabbits and dandelions alike, from where they want and need to go and live (237). Colonial and proprietary ideologies oppress humans and nonhumans alike.

Ecological strands have been present in anarchist discourse at least since 'first wave' theorists. Kropotkin and Bakunin seemed to view human life as a part of nature and Kropotkin's work particularly emphasised cooperation, mutual aid and reciprocity in the natural world, rather than interpretations of Darwinian theory which overstated struggle and competition, and Kropotkin seemingly suggested that human society could be modelled on this ecological cooperation (Hall 378). As I argue later in this chapter, and in Part Two,

discussions about ecology might engender interesting and fruitful ways of thinking through various 'human' or 'cultural' problems.

However, many western socially oriented counter-cultural discourses, including feminism and anarchism, have not overtly pondered how we might live within nonhuman nature and alongside other beings and often neglect environmental concerns almost completely (Hall 374). It seems telling that although anarchism rejects "all" forms of domination, including classism, racism, sexism, ableism, ageism and homophobia, anarchist groups and theorists rarely include speciesism as a form of domination, or address how humans relate to the nonhuman world (Best 197; Hall 378). This is a hypocrisy akin to the refusal to acknowledge the domination of men over women, or of white feminists to recognise racism (Best 163). More broadly, Zerzan suggests that socialist and left-wing discourses seem to have difficulty considering biocentrism and eco-centrism because it makes apparent the ways in which globalization, mass production and increased consumption for all humans (often a leftist aim) is built on the domination and exploitation of the nonhuman environment (Zerzan, "What is Liberation?" 205). That is, the focus is on human liberation and comfort hierarchically ordered above nonhuman liberation and respect for ecosystems. Further, on the other hand it might even be argued that in western countries concern for 'the environment' is bourgeois and elitist and relates to wanting to tidy-up, control and 'care for' nature as a mark of moral superiority over the working classes (despite the working classes being more adversely affected by environmental pollution than the middle classes—Peterson and Lupton 103). For example, using 'eco friendly' products and buying vegan food becomes another marker of class and this disguises the fact that it is the wealthy who are disproportionately responsible for environmental degradation.

Today various newer strands of anarchism, such as Green Anarchy, anarcho-primitivism, natural anarchism and veganarchism uphold biocentric values. To various extents, these schools of thought, along with radical and revolutionary environmentalisms, hold that social and environmental issues are interconnected and share a common cause of oppression, namely, dominating and hierarchical modes of existence. In particular, like eco-feminists, eco-anarchists understand that the same hierarchies which justify the superiority of men, white people and capitalists, also account for the domination of humans over nonhuman nature. Perhaps most radically, Green Anarchy and anarcho-primitivists view civilisation (the last 10,000 years of human existence) as the primary source of current social, psychological, health and ecological problems and advocate for a return to a gatherer-hunter way of life (Green Anarchy Collective). Natural anarchists hold nonhuman natures and other species as natural allies in a struggle for peace and freedom, and suggest that human anarchists could learn from observing forms of nonhuman organization, co-operation and resistance to human domination (Jones 236). Plant, animal, bacteria, fungi, rock, river might all be considered 'kin' with their own 'purposes' for being (Hall 386), or rather, no less 'purpose' than humans.

For natural anarchists, anarchism for humans and nonhumans is one and the same. Patrice Jones contends that many kinds of life forms can be seen as living and expressing "anarchy in its purest form", and that anarchist humans have much to learn from these "outlaws" who "routinely disregard the authorities and boundaries established by people while working cooperatively with one another to pursue their own purposes in the context of human exploitation and expropriation" (236). As an example, Jones recalls a story about the elephant Nana, who, while protected by her herd, undid the latches of a stockade to free antelopes who had been imprisoned by people that day. Jones interprets this as an

indication that elephants care about other animals and species and are capable of ‘anarchist’ action (241). Nonhuman animals can therefore be viewed as potential ‘teachers’ to human anarchists, as well as allies sharing similar struggles. This is a different way of positioning ourselves in relation to nonhuman animals and natures which deviates from dominant discourses and practices which seek to control nonhuman life or view it as valuable only to the extent that it is profitable. In this sense, humans might find a kind of utopian inspiration from observing, engaging and empathising with nonhuman natures (Hall 387; Jones 241). Co-operation, hardly a fantastical utopian idea, is one that nonetheless appears radical in cultures in which domination and hierarchy has become the norm.

However, an ethics of relating to nonhuman natures is far from straight-forward given that the very basis for life is interconnection and interdependence. Pondering the question of nonhuman animal exploitation and co-existence means moving beyond vaguer notions of the physical ‘environment’ or abstract ‘eco-system’ and towards the specifics of species. Critical Animal Studies (CAS) scholars, and some veganarchists, such as Best, argue that the domination and dietary consumption of nonhuman animals is both a crucial environmental concern, *and* the root of the domination of humans (197), and that instrumentalism underlies domination and hierarchy (196). Yet veganism, for example, is problematically co-opted into neoliberalism and consumerism, it has become, or perhaps has always been, a personal choice by which an individual holds oneself to account in order to end what Dominick refers to as ‘internal’ oppression (Dominick 5). In a sense this represents a kind of moral, and often health-related self-improvement whereby individuals make the ‘right’ market choices as if buying the ‘right’ products might absolve guilt over participation in a mode of production and consumption that is inherently exploitative.

For some anarchist theorists (such as Best, Dominick, Nocella) refusing to exploit and consume nonhuman animals is an obvious way of living one's anarchism. Dominick argues that veganism can be seen as an anarchist practice in that it is personal yet relational, relates to 'everyday' life, and is grounded in the present and lived experience, cohering with an anarchist ethic of starting here and now to try and live in the way one wants the world to be (Dominick 13). In this sense it reflects immanence: a utopian impulse for a more compassionate, egalitarian, peaceful and abundant world. Veganism might therefore be usefully thought of as a utopian practice, rather than in absolute, 'rationalist', outcome-focused terms. This is not to say that veganism is 'unrealistic', but that its utopianly ethical stance, its striving for a different world in the here-and-now, is more important than the precise mechanisms which constitute vegan dietary choices. That is, instead of calculating the outcome or impact of one's dietary practices (although many vegans do), veganism might be thought of as a utopian wish embodied in the lives of (certain) individuals—in direct action. As Wrenn also argues, veganism might be said to constitute a kind of critical utopian wish for an alternative world (20).

More practically, there are other commonalities between anarchism and ecology, such as the ways in which radical environmentalist groups organise (often anarchically), and the tactics employed such as direct action (Hall 384). Likewise, Brian Morris notes that anarchic organisation itself can be seen as ecologically-oriented because of its principles of decentralisation, heterarchical social organisation and interdependence (qtd. in Hall 379). This is illustrated in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* where the anarcho-syndicalist Anarresti "held the ideal of complex organicism. They built the roads first the houses second. The special resources and products of each region were interchanged continually with those of others, in an intricate process of balance: that balance of diversity which is the characteristic

of life, of natural and social ecology” (*The Dispossessed* 82). For the Anarresti, their anarchism is inseparable from the way they live as part of an ecological web with awareness of both the intricate ecological balance which they can affect, and their own vulnerability to being affected by earthquakes, food shortages and climate patterns. As Le Guin demonstrates in *The Dispossessed*, anarchism and ecologism can be compatible and mutually enriching.

Radical environmentalisms and deep ecological writing might be read as utopianly alternative. While sometimes derided for being nostalgic, mythical and unrealistic (Luke 8), from the utopian perspective I am employing here, the extent to which a discourse, theory or movement mirrors current reality and reproduces the present does not determine its usefulness or value. Of greater interest here, is what these kinds of discourses *do* and what kind of a world such movements are trying to bring about—whether their processes would nonetheless produce something different, however incomplete. It seems worth pointing out that radical environmentalisms and deep ecologies are literally grounded utopianisms which are involved in trying to imagine different ways of living and thinking rooted in an essential concern for the basis for life, the ecosystems with which human existence is entangled. It is not clear what makes these counter discourses less realistic than the (crypto)utopic models of their critics. A utopian vision for a society which is both infinitely growing and developing, while causing no adverse environmental effects for the elite, is arguably more unrealistic for its assumption of infinite growth on a finite planet.

Deep ecology critiques human superiority, domination, industrialisation and consumerism, and advocates for ecological harmony, viewing humans as existing *in* nature, acknowledging the relatedness of all things, and the intrinsic value of nonhuman beings (Luke 5). Arne Nass, a Norwegian philosopher writing in the 1970s is often credited with

identifying a distinction between “deep” ecology, which is eco-centric or biocentric, and “shallow” ecology, which is anthropocentric (Bari 3). Biocentrism, or deep ecology, is the idea that nonhuman life does not exist for the purposes of human use and this is considered to be both an ethical stance, and a ‘law’ of nature which exists regardless of human assumptions (Bari 3). Ethics and ‘reality’, in this instance, are therefore coherent. Although often attributed to Naess, as Bari points out, the ‘deep ecology’ to which westerners refer seems to reflect a very old view found in many indigenous cultures as well as more recent western deep green activist movements (3). It is therefore not a ‘new’ way of thinking, but, like anarchism and utopianism, resurfaces across cultures, times and places. Unlike shallow ecology which often advocates for scientific and technological ‘solutions’, proponents of deep ecology claim to reject Enlightenment philosophy, seeing it as a form of domination of both nature and humans, and advocates for returning humans to a more mythological, diverse and enchanted way of thinking about the world (Luke 8).

In contrast, shallow ecology, or ‘light green’ environmentalism, is anthropocentric to the extent that it is only interested in aiding, caring for or resisting the destruction of other forms of life for the purposes of direct human benefit—hierarchically ordering human life over other lifeforms (Luke 5). Mainstream environmentalism, often ‘shallow’ or ‘soft’ in its approach, presents industrialism, over-use of energy and pollution as problems to be solved (often with yet more technology) but does not always link these issues to a critique of culture, power and societal structure, and many do not advocate for radical change (Cohen and Kennedy 366-367). ‘Light’ green, or capitalist green discourses for example advocate, not for systematic change, but for ‘greener’ market options and consumer choices (366; Spash 11). So-called ‘green’ technology, which draws on many of the same resources (mining, plastics, toxic metals) as the ‘unsustainable’ technology it claims to supplant, may

similarly contribute to ecological and social destruction (Anonymous “The False Promise” 8; Böhm, Misoczky, and Moog 16). While increasingly corporates and governments pay lip service to ‘the environment’ or climate change, the mainstream environmental movement has become deradicalized and ignores the needs of the ‘developing’ world, women, children and indigenous peoples (Best and Nocella 23). Even deep ecology and conservation groups can seem counter-productive in this way because their ‘fetishization’ of wilderness seems to reflect a white, masculinized ideal of nature as virginally pristine, distant, and accessible only to those with money, masculinity and mobility, and exists to serve their purposes of self-discovery or leisure, rather than nature as a place where people need to live (Luke xiii). While radical and revolutionary environmentalisms often oppose androcentric and capitalist ideologies, mainstream environmentalism, veganism and animal rights advocates often do not ground their arguments in a critique of the capitalist system (Best 198; Gelderloos 6-8). Framing environmentalism in terms of individual responsibility and consumerism to imply that ‘saving the environment’ consists in making rational choices about ‘eco friendly’ products such as plastic, animal products and chemicals, does little in the way of challenging the very structures which seem responsible for environmental problems. That is, environmentalism alone does not necessarily challenge capitalism and anthropocentrism.

The Activity of Theory

Perhaps there is an openness to alterity missing in mainstream discourses. I turn now to some more ‘theoretical’ points in relation to the functions of theories and utopianism. In particular, the notion of utopianism as immanent, and the relationships between the ‘estranged’ worlds of academia and imagination, and the embodied actualities

of political practices. In the previous chapter I posited characteristics about utopianism which seem contradictory. On the one hand, a number of theorists take utopianism to refer to something that is 'not yet' (Bloch 40) and argue that utopianism functions through estrangement as the source of its subversive political function (Sargisson, "What's Wrong with Ecofeminism" 53). For example Sargisson's argument that "as estranged texts, utopias are able to view from an imaginary distance the society whence they originate" (53), is a claim which characterises utopianism in terms of detachment. On the other hand I have been tying utopianism to really existing social and cultural movements and critical discourses which are concerned with change in the present. For example Reedy argues that the reasons for using utopianism as an academic are practical and political in that utopianism challenges the passive tendency for radical intellectuals to retreat into a safe monastery of books and theory which do not create change in the 'real world' (Reedy 186). In other words, somewhat paradoxically, utopianism can return critical academic theories to the 'real world'.

For Marxists and anarchists the function of utopianism is embodied action. According to Jameson, the utopian form disrupts the status-quo by insisting on alternative possibilities, yet its power does not lie in offering a complete picture of 'after the revolution', but in emphasising the break itself (Cevasco 61). The break, while less visionary, is seen by many academics as the priority, because it can create the possibility for revolution (62). This way of thinking seems to align in some ways with what Bonanno, refers to as the "propulsive utopia", the outlet for which is revolution. However this kind of utopianism is less about academia, than it is the "lifeblood of the real movement" which "feeds off a hidden but burning collective desire" which you might "suddenly...find at the street corner" and in a form which is "not usually staggering. It is often shy and unsure of

itself and certainly does not conjure up a vision of lightning on the road to Damascus” (Bonanno 5). While it can be hidden or ordinary, the “explosive potential” of utopia is powerful when it combines with the active, embodied movements of political revolt, such as protests and workers’ strikes (Bonanno 7). While utopianism might be understood in terms of ‘desire’ and ‘not yet’, it is immanent and embodied where it finds expression in activist movements such as environmentalism, anarchism, feminism and their variants.

With these points in mind, there seems something slightly at odds with an emphasis on estrangement, and the feminist, anarchist and environmentalist concern with immanence and engagement with the ‘real world’ or ‘materialisms’ and ‘lived experience’. Anarchism, with its dedication to *practice* rather than academic speculation alone, and its desire to create a radically different society, might exemplify Jacobsen’s observation that utopianism bridges *vita activa* and *vita contemplative* (27). These more ‘practical’ concerns reflect a kind of utopianism which is immanent, rather than transcendent, concerned with the ‘here and now’ rather than a distant and abstract future. That is, the ‘utopian’ wishes of anarchist and grassroots movements are usually grounded in real and urgent concerns suggesting that utopianism is about the possible, rather than about unrealistic dreams (Fournier 210). Indeed, given that throughout most of human history people have lived in small communities, not empires, anarchism can be seen as more ‘natural’ or ‘realistic’ than hierarchy and domination (Reedy 178). Under this view, if anarchism is utopian, then utopianism is also realistic, and theory and practice, vision and action, become more difficult to untangle.

According to Honeywell, anarchism and utopianism can be viewed as linked through a shared emphasis on immanence indicated through a focus on the immediate situation and

those within it, rather than ‘change from above’, abstraction, ‘big science’ or policy. Both utopianism and anarchism demand *immediate* change in the here and now, rather than placing trust in a far-off future vision like Marxism (Honeywell 243). Some claim that an ‘anarchist impulse’ is immanent because it is, like Bloch’s utopian impulse, always already there, “like a seed beneath the snow” (Ward) expressed through everyday acts of mutual aid, solidarity and self-determination (de Acosta 29). Honeywell suggests that an anarchist impulse follows from a utopian one, that is, if hope is immanent (a utopian impulse) then social change should be immediate (anarchist), such as in the case of direct action and grassroots movements (244) (such as the Seattle protests or the Zapatista movement (Fournier 189, 208)). Direct action side-steps, or ignores power and authorities, and proceeds as if the state (or other authority) simply does not exist, and as if one is already free to execute a plan, usually with others (Graeber, *Direct Action* 203). It is less about making “a grand gesture of defiance” and more about enacting the change one wishes to see (203). It might be seen as a kind of ‘real’ utopian practice.

Anarchist ethics are congruent with utopianism as process. Anarchist ethics “insists that means contain their own ends, that a genuinely transformative movement ‘prefigures’ the society it seeks to bring about in its practices here and now” (Cohn 116). In a sense, this *is* utopia-as-process, because discourses (means) contain utopias (ends) which are one and the same. As Graeber argues, process is paramount:

no anarchist, I think it's safe to say, would be willing to accept an arrangement where street actions end up being reduced to something like soccer games, with all the rules worked out in advance. The entire logic of direct action militates against that. Instead, just as in consensus process, they collapse together two things that are

normally considered separate levels--the process of decision making and the means of its enforcement, so here, in street actions, they tend insofar as possible to collapse the political, negotiating process into the structure of the action itself. They attempt to win the contest, as it were, by continually changing the definition of what is the field, what are the rules, what are the stakes-and they do it on the field itself. (Graeber, *Direct Action* 506).

In this way, as Graeber implies, actions are not always preconceived in advance, but continuously in a state of happening and evolving. The 'decision' is its process, and is continuously negotiated through actions, and there might be no consensus-based decisions 'made' and finalised. Rather, more like Latour's notion of 'collective', actions are never 'complete' and actants can potentially affect and change the actions of other actants (*Politics*, 80).

At the same time, visions and plans serve a purpose. For some anarchists it seems tempting to insist on 'smashing the state' and then 'everything will be fine' (Seyferth 282). In other words, emphasising the 'break' itself, rather than a distant dream 'after the revolution' (Jameson in Cevalco 61). However as Seyferth points out, demolishing the state and having nothing to replace it with, say to provide security, health and food, is rather problematic. It is necessary to have ideas of what the alternatives will be and, as Seyferth also notes, this is basically the utopian mode (282). One source of such ideas might be academic theory (as well as fiction). Yet often 'action' and 'theory' are held apart from each other as if theorising or thinking are not activities. I would like to problematise this division, and the accompanying assumption that anarchism is not a theoretical or academic concern. By doing so I am also questioning the view that abstract theory, such as poststructuralism, is

not relevant to socio-cultural-political and material realities. This, I think, is an apposite concern for both utopianism and anarchism because each often expresses dissatisfaction with such divisive conventions. Already, anarchism and utopianism challenge the distinction between, and hierarchical ordering of, theory and practice, or dreaming and reality. Utopianism and anarchism can be realist, grounded in practice and reality, the details of the everyday, as well as theory and vision, but yet 'dreaming' is crucial for both. In any case, any discourse interested in how people can, and do, carry out their daily lives in ways which counter dominant discourses, norms or power involves some utopianism.

Yet if anarchist movements are grassroots initiated and driven, based on direct action for the imminent needs of everyday people, then what place do academic theories, and 'elitist' scholars, have in anarchism? Within anarchist studies there are a range of responses to this dilemma. For example, any political practice can benefit from critical scrutiny and anarchism is no exception (Martin 107). Although this can create tension between 'elitist' academics and grassroots activists, some argue that intellectual work does not necessarily entail an elevated status or the reinstatement of hierarchy (108). Theory and research may also be used to undermine power and help the oppressed, for example "public intellectuals" who do not serve the state and market (Atkinson 80) but work to make ideas more accessible to the public (Fournier 210). Besides, by its own logic, anarchism needs to be able to accommodate philosophy, theory, research, art and those inclined to such work, without assuming that these activities are somehow different from work such as caring for children or digging drains.

Another argument often invoked is that theories have uses for social change and activism because action is determined by (sometimes unconscious) ideas (Atkinson 80). This claim too seems to rely on mind/body dualism which may be neither useful for anarchist

and utopian theory-practice in the postmodern era, nor consistent with the principles of inclusion, means-ends coherence and alterity. Another way of putting this is that assuming a *difference* between theory and political action is the failure to recognise that “knowledge/education is itself a site of struggle” (Ahmed 237). Drawing hard and fast distinctions between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ circumscribes what ‘counts’ as action or practice, and what kind of activities are seen as intelligent, intentional and creative. As Cohn argues, for anarchists, language *is* action and so “writing and reading are not only the repeated confirmation of self-referential structures; they can be and are a means of *transformation*” (118). In a similar vein, writing papers for example might also be seen as a way of engaging in public debate about alternatives (Fournier 210), like writing science-fiction or utopias might be considered a version of utopian practice and public debate.

Rather than holding anarchism and academic theory apart, it may be instead more useful to consider academic work as an activity which can be practised according to anarchist principles of co-operation, autonomy, democracy, subversion, alterity, plurality and fluidity. Unlike Marxism and feminism, anarchism is not founded in an epistemological schema—a notion of ‘truth’ (for example, about history, or capital or patriarchy) but in an *ethical* stance of affirming freedom, equality and difference as both ends and means, and the refusal of domination and hierarchy (Cohn 116). Theory adopting these traits would therefore be co-operative, horizontal, pluralistic and ethical. For example Greenway calls for “a ‘methodological anarchism that relinquishes control, challenges boundaries and hierarchies, and provides a space for new ideas to emerge” (qtd. in Heckert and Cleminson 1). This might be both co-extensive of *and* contradictory to academic work as it is currently practised.

For example, Cohn's outlining of an anarchist literary theoretical practice suggests taking a horizontal or federal approach rather than one based on competition and domination. This means engaging without a view to dominate or be dominated by a text or theory, but entering into a 'dialogue of possibilities' (Cohn 119), refusing superiority and reconstructing one's own perspective using the text or theory being read (117). This entails an open and inductive approach which pays attention to relationships and context and remains open to surprise (118). Texts must also always be contextualised in a broader social context and one should seek to determine "what kind of relationships the text offers to bring about between ourselves and one another, between ourselves and the world" (117). It holds that the reader and text together construct meaning, and perspectives internal and external to the text come together: in other words, meaning is *relational* (120), and texts make collective reason possible (123).

Anarchist theory must of course also involve a critique which includes the academy itself as a site of domination. Domination exists at the scholarly and philosophical level as much as anywhere else as evidenced by the authority of certain kinds of voices, views and disciplines and by what comes to be accepted as 'truth'. DeLeon and Love call for an anarchist approach to academia which regards the authority of the 'hard' sciences as a form of domination linked to capitalism, oppression of many people, and ecological exploitation (162). Profitable science, empiricism and positivism dominate the creation of knowledge, and similarly androcentric and anthropocentric views (often veiled as 'rational' or 'logical') dominate feminist and anti-anthropocentric ones. In universities the arts and humanities are routinely de-valued, while disciplines such as engineering, agriculture, commerce and 'hard sciences' receive ever more support as useful and 'progressive' fields because they are profitable.

In the absence of domination perhaps plurality, spontaneity and cooperation might flourish at the theoretical level. de Acosta remarks that scholars tend to presuppose scarcity in relation to theory, taking it as given that truth is limited, only *one* can survive, only *one* can really be 'true'. de Acosta suggests that by presupposing *abundance* more interdisciplinarity, plurality, spontaneity and cooperation within theory might grow (27). For example, as Cohn, de Acosta, and Graeber suggest, rather than treating academia as a game or competition in which scholars try to 'win' or dominate in a struggle for 'survival of the fittest', abundance, cooperation and coexistence could be presupposed. This might mean, following Cohn, an active recognition that meaning is co-created and, rather than theorizing with a view to win a discussion or finally find the 'truth', instead entering into a 'dialogue' with other theories in which critique and transformation is reciprocal. The suggestion, is of allowing one's own perspective to be reconstructed and transformed (Cohn 117). This entails change, transformation and the sharing and mingling of ideas; the perma-cultural nurturing of variety rather than weeding out of all but the 'best'.

In practice, this might mean engaging with texts and ideas on their own terms, rather than seeking to parody or exaggerate because, as Graeber observes, fun as it might be,

it's hard to see how a strategy of systematically misrepresenting other scholars' arguments could actually contribute to the furtherance of human knowledge. It is useful only if one sees oneself as fighting a battle and the only object is to win. One uses such techniques to impress an audience. Of course, in academic battles, there is often no audience – other than grad students or other feudal retainers – which makes it all seem rather pointless, but that doesn't seem to matter (Graeber, "Anarchism" 108).

Arguably, there *is* a war that anarchist theorists want to win: class war: a war against capitalism, patriarchy and the state. The problem that Graeber identifies perhaps, is that many academics fail to acknowledge this, or apply competitive tactics as a 'default' regardless of the context which might mean discouraging, excluding or silencing other approaches. Perhaps anarchist theory should have *no* default or 'best' method, and in this way, strategies of both subversion and engagement are acceptable and necessary.

Further, Graeber's criticism of 'misrepresentation' seems to sit somewhat uneasily alongside post(modern)anarchist techniques of subversion and parody, and the postmodern refusal of 'authenticity'. Strategies of (re)appropriation are considered an effective tactic within the context of postmodern capitalism which is so adept at absorbing, assimilating and appropriating (Campbell 104). Capitalism effectively utilizes fluid and detached signs, ideas and information and Call argues that anarchists can also take advantage of these tactics. Because it is in the production of signs that the most powerful hegemony of the state and capital now reside, it is here where anarchism must now appear, placing itself "outside" of the "real" in order to create a void of symbolic exchange which interrupts the power structures of the state and capital (Campbell 102-104). Call posits the Guy Fawkes mask, which commonly appears at protests, in popular culture and as a commodity after its popularization by the movie *V for Vendetta*, as exemplary (Call, "A is for Anarchy" 156). It is not attached to any particular political cause, in fact it has been worn by opposing groups to the extent that it might be called apolitical. However, Call argues that this lack of consistency is precisely its power, because it does not offer "a specific political message of brief and dubious relevance" but more usefully gives "a subversive system of symbolic representation" (170). This may more adequately address the manifestations of power

because if the power of the state is illusory and based on manipulating reality, as Baudrillard is interpreted as saying, then anarchism can seize power by replacing dominant discourses with radical alternative ones (156) and this can be done by reclaiming, twisting, and appropriating traditional notions (language, symbols) to the end that they are deprived of their earlier meaning (Eckert 77).

Yet what such interest in *representation* is doing appearing in anarchist theory might also be criticised, given that, to various degrees, anarchists are critical of representation in many forms. Taken to its logical conclusion, as anarcho-primitivists argue, this entails rejecting symbolic culture and the use of language, numbers and pictures to mediate lived experience, because this is a form of representation which is always entangled with authority and power (The Green Anarchy Collective 2). However Cohn argues that in literary theory anarchism does not reject representation at the textual level, because a text *must* represent to exist, and this, according to Cohn, need not be paired with power in any simple or absolute sense (122). For Cohn, and other non anarcho-primitivists, it is not appropriate simply to reject textual representation wholesale, but to question how a text can be seen as representing reality and real life (123). This reveals that texts are not direct or neutral, but promote certain worldviews—what reality is really like and how life should be (124). In other words, texts, discourses and theories contain utopias, and an anarchist reading is interested in what these are.

A final characteristic between utopian theory (following Levitas and Bloch) and contemporary anarchist theory is an attendance to the marginal, fleeting, impulsive and silenced (de Acosta 32). In the margins and the gaps, there might be a greater possibility for the new and unexpected and it seems appropriate that anarchist theorists “learn what they share with those without one primary territory, those whose philosophy is fabricated

piecemeal” (de Acosta 32). Growth flourishes in the liminal, in the places which are not the ‘either’ or the ‘or’ as Le Guin would put it (Le Guin, “A Non-Euclidean view” 14), or, the places which are ‘no places’. Bloch’s utopian impulse is itself larval, half-formed as it is ‘Not-Yet’. These pieces of the not-yet are never transcendent, but always already in existence. It is apposite then, for an ‘anarchist-utopian’, or ‘anarcha-utopian’ perspective to consider the liminal or larval as zones rich in utopian impulses. These ‘no places’ of ‘fabricated piecemeal’ can nonetheless be brought together and illustrated. Theory is one such place where this occurs, another is in the domain of critical utopian fiction.

Chapter Three: What's the Alternative? Living without Capitalism and Patriarchy in Anarres and Mattapoisett

Art, fiction, utopianism and science-fiction are needed to fire the utopian imagination, to communicate what is not (yet) expressible in other kinds of discourse such as theory or every day conversations. This is similar to what left communists such as The Frankfurt School claim about art and literature. For a number of “left communists” such as The Frankfurt School, literature and art was both ends and means, and Adorno has argued that within certain types of art it was possible to discern the “faint heartbeat of utopia amidst the deafening cacophony of contemporary culture” (qtd. in el-Ojeili 235). There was the hope, among theorists such as Adorno and Marcuse, that “the fragmentation of such art promised to tear down “the soothing façade of capitalist life” and Marcuse held that “art’s very *aesthetic form* demanded—against the given—that things must change” (236). As Moylan puts it, utopia is what cannot yet be said with current concepts, or cannot yet be done given political constraints (Moylan, *Demand* 39). In this way it is an ‘object of meditation’ (Jameson qtd. in Moylan 40), and “anticipation of what could not yet be conceptualised is the driving impulse of the genre itself” as well as the “radical insufficiency of the solutions at hand” (40). In the previous chapter I explored the content of anarchist, feminist and environmentalist ideas. In this chapter, I examine how these ideas are put into ‘practice’ or made ‘real’ through critical utopian fiction.

What follows is a description and analysis of two well-known feminist anarchist novels, *The Dispossessed* (1974), by Ursula K. Le Guin, and *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) by Marge Piercy novels which are well established in the feminist sci-fi or utopian “canon”. To supplement my own reading, I draw primarily from Tom Moylan’s

interpretation of two of the novels on which his study of critical utopias is based. I posit these critical utopian novels as illustrations of what anarchism and anarcha-feminism looks like 'in practice' at the level of imagined 'lived experience'. Both novels appeared in the wake of the women's movement of the 70s and with the rise of environmentalism as well as a number of other counter cultural movements, and Moylan reads these as both reflections of, and participants in this oppositional culture (*Demand* 12). They can themselves be considered radical acts of 'oppositional practice' (51). Further to this, I frame Le Guin and Piercy as theorists and activists whose work engages ideas which reflect the feminist and anarchist theory discussed in previous chapters. The function of this is to show an important way in which utopian thought is 'done', and that it might in particular speak to the utopianism of the postmodern period, critical utopianism having been with it since its 'beginning'.

I also want to suggest, however, that while the concreteness of the societies described, coupled with their estrangement from the present, is both pertinent to thinking utopically of alternatives, it also has its limits. That is, while these are critical utopias, they nonetheless describe already functioning societies in the future, possibly at the expense of investigating the kind of 'otherness' or utopian impulse in the present which might help us to change our present (unlike McAlpine's more ambiguous novels which I explore in Part Two). This is not so much a criticism as an acknowledgement of the limits of this kind of utopianism, and the suggestion that there are other ways in which utopianism can, or has been developed. Yet, as I have argued, it is difficult to launch any criticism without having at least some notion that there might be alternatives, and some 'concrete' ideas about what these might be like.

In saying that, feminist utopian novels such as *The Dispossessed* (Le Guin), *Running Away from Home* (McAlpine), *The Limits of Green* (McAlpine) and *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Piercy) do not present a utopia like More's or Bacon's or Bravo's but tell a story. This departs from the conventions of older utopias such as More's, Bacon's and Plato's which were more concerned with depicting infrastructure, kinship models and means of production than they were with reproduction of humans and social life and its accompanying problems and conflicts. Critical utopias suggest that the work of utopianism and social change lies not necessarily in drafting policy, conceptualising so-called 'big' ideas, social planning and building infrastructure (although these are of course often necessary and important), but in the more tedious and incremental work of relating, living alongside and negotiating with other humans and actants. This focus on everyday, mundane, problem-ridden human interactions, which are not solution-focussed, which do not present or even try to find 'answers', are process-oriented (and thus can be seen as relevant to anarchism) and makes them, what Moylan terms, "critical utopias". The utopia is in the story of these details of entanglement and in the relationships between characters. There is no abstract 'structure' beyond the act of relating.

Critical utopias are characterised by imperfection, process, details, realism and questioning (Moylan, *Demand* 36). Through its form and self-reflexive commentary, the critical utopia "negates static ideals, preserves radical action, and creates a neutral space in which opposition can be articulated and received" (51). In doing so, they preserve "the expression of otherness and radical difference" and are not unified and representational like the traditional utopia, but "broken open" and "fragmented" (46). In this way they "hold open the activity of the utopian imagination while also being fully aware that the figures of any one utopian society are doomed to ideological closure and compromise" (36). That is,

critical utopias are self-critical in that it is understood that perfection is not possible, in fact, perhaps not even desirable. As Marin theorises, “not only is utopia not “realisable”, but it could not be realised without destroying itself” (qtd. in Moylan 46). Critical utopias thus rescue the utopian impulse by challenging and deconstructing it, destroying it in order to save it (46). Importantly this implies that any *one* utopian society will become ideologically ‘closed’—the problem is perhaps in singularity; the insistence that any *one* utopia is the ‘right’ one (Sargent, “In Defense” 13). Whether this is simply another version of the logic of free-market capitalism, of having variety and ‘choice’ remains troubling. Further, that this kind of plurality precludes the possibility of a unified front which *might* be necessary to effectively oppose capitalism and patriarchy and produce viable alternatives remains contentious. This will be the subject of discussion in later chapters.

Arising out of activism of the 1960s and 1970s, *The Dispossessed* (Le Guin) and *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Piercy) can be situated within anarchist, feminist, socialist and oppositional politics. Moylan reads *The Dispossessed* as a (flawed) response to the contradictions of both capitalism and socialism informed by Le Guin’s anarcho-communism and utopias of William Morris’ *News from Nowhere* (1890) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915) (*Demand* 91). It reflects anarchist thought, such as Peter Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid*, as well as practices of anarcho-syndicalism of the International Workers of the World, and the counter-culture and civil-rights, anti-war and student movements of the 1960s (96). Because of Piercy’s involvement in political activism and political writings, Moylan positions *Woman on the Edge of Time* in direct relation to activist movements (122). In this novel, Piercy contrasts the horrors of the mental hospital with the future utopic society of Mattapoisett through her protagonist Connie who travels through time. Moylan reads the mental ward in *Woman* as a microcosm of the bureaucratic capitalist system and its racism,

sexism and violence (123). The hope within this, is that within the “hell” of Connie’s hospital imprisonment are the “seeds of resistance and resurrection as a revolutionary fighter” (142). In this sense, it is a text about resistance as a utopian process.

The Dispossessed (Le Guin) and *Woman* (Piercy) depict versions of anarchism which differ markedly from each other, yet represent shared commitments to communality, individual development, gender equality, anti-authority, non-alienated labour, wariness of power, and hostility towards hierarchical capitalist and exploitative societies. Both Anarres (*The Dispossessed*) and future Mattapoisett (*Woman*) are communalist societies in which people live in tightly knit communities sharing all resources and work, while also encouraging individual development and agency. Yet Le Guin and Piercy refuse to depict perfectly formed end-points at which all problems are solved. Instead, the societies of Anarres and Mattapoisett are depicted as in process, and the protagonists are critical of their own societies. This frustrates the urge to read either novel as a blueprint or a manifesto. Unlike traditional utopias such as More’s or Plato’s, the story, relationships and individual characters are as important as the content and structure of the society depicted. In other words, the society and its representation is *process* rather than ends, which is in itself a kind of anarchist feminist approach to utopian thinking and fictional writing.

The notable differences in location, social structure and culture suggest that there need not be ‘ideal’ environmental or social conditions for anarchism, but that it can arise in response to a variety of social and ecological contexts. *The Dispossessed* depicts the planet/society of Anarres, a society based on a dry and barren planet whose inhabitants have escaped from the highly capitalist, abundant and consumerist planet Urras to begin a new society based on the anarchist teachings of a woman named Odo (Odonianism). The Anarresti live at the mercy of this harsh environment, stricken by drought, food shortages

and earthquakes, yet all resources and labour are shared. The novel follows the life of Shevek, a physicist who works on a theory of time capable of accommodating both linear and cyclical time, and part of his research involves travelling back to Urras to meet others in his field, becoming the first Anarresti to return to Urras.

In *Woman on the Edge of Time* Connie, a poor, Mexican-American woman involuntarily institutionalised in a hospital for the mentally ill finds she can contact and travel to the future anarcha-feminist society Mattapoisett in the year 2137 by making telepathic contact with Luciente, her future counter-part. In keeping with feminist utopian explorations of consciousness and critiques of 'madness', as Seabury notes, whether Connie 'really' visits Mattapoisett or whether it is a symptom of her madness is left (deliberately) ambiguous (Seabury 153) and in some ways, besides the point. Interestingly Moylan reads Luciente and Connie as versions of the same person—one shaped by violence of the present, and the other by utopia (*Demand* 139). Through 'question-answer' dialogue between Connie and Luciente the features of Mattapoisett, an abundant and colourful village on the edge of a wetland, one of many anarchist villages and regions now on Earth, are conveyed. Mattapoisett is a vibrant place of short working days, frequent parties, plentiful food, advanced scientific research and celebration of creativity and art. However, while already an established free society, the anarchist villages in which most humans are now living are at war with capitalists of the old world and their robot armies. This invites interesting questions about the place of violence within, and as a means to utopia.

Anarres and Mattapoisett are societies built around immediate forms of relating. All work and social life revolves around syndicates which are self-determining, and neither has a state or form of currency. At one point in the novel Le Guin has Shevek give a defence of this, saying that

where there's no money the real motives are clearer, maybe. People like to do things. They like to do them well. ...But really, it is the question of ends and means. After all, work is done for the work's sake. There is no other reward, on Anarres, no other law. One's own pleasure, and the respect of one's fellows. That is all. (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 125)

The 'radical' proposition is that social life can occur without the mediation of money and hierarchy, and that this is a way of living which does not separate means and ends. What this entails is that so-called progress or production of goods cannot justify exploitation, unlike under capitalism which privileges end-goals of profit (for the bourgeoisie) over the processes of exploitation by which this is attained. Similarly, on Anarres (so-called) order, security and stability cannot justify the domination of a few over everyone else. Proponents of capitalism frequently hold that without monetary motivation and violent or unpleasant punishment people are disinclined to do any work at all. Both of these novels engage with and reject this concern, instead implying a view of work as a naturally occurring aspect of human existence and people enjoy or are compelled to create or produce. In response to the challenge that without coercion, class and poverty there will be no one to do the "garbage collecting, grave digging," "mercury mining," or "shit processing," (125) Le Guin imagines a persuasive system in which all unpleasant or dangerous work is shared. As Shevek says, sharing the "dirty work" perhaps is "not efficient, but what else is to be done? You can't tell a man to work on a job that will cripple him or kill him in a few years. Why should he do that?" (125). The suggestion is that an ethics of means-ends coherence, as both a form of logic and a way of life, precludes the possibility of exploitation.

Means-ends coherence, Le Guin suggests, is both an ethical and epistemological proposition. In fact, by its very logic these concepts are not held separable. In the novel, this is depicted through Shevek's academic work relating to the philosophy of time. Specifically, Le Guin explores how anarchism and non-anarchism construct different versions of physical reality and philosophy and that the western or non-anarchist separation of means and ends reflect dominant conceptions of time, cause and effect. Shevek's work in physics is to reconcile the theory and experience of time as linear, with the theory and experience of time as cyclical, and thus means and ends. He explains to the Urrasti that

Sequency explains beautifully our sense of linear time, and the evidence of evolution. It includes creation, and mortality. But there it stops. It deals with all that changes, but it cannot explain why things also endure. It speaks only of the arrow of time — never of the circle of time... on the big scale, the cosmos: well, you know we think that the whole universe is a cyclic process, an oscillation of expansion and contraction, without any before or after. Only within each of the great cycles, where we live, only there is there linear time, evolution, change. So then time has two aspects. There is the arrow, the running river, without which there is no change, no progress, or direction, or creation. And there is the circle or the cycle, without which there is chaos, meaningless succession of instants, a world without clocks or seasons or promises. (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 186).

To the disappointment of the Urrasti, Shevek's theory is not particularly profitable, and rather, "the application of temporal physics is in ethics" because "our sense of time involves

our ability to separate cause and effect, means and end” (187). This is what makes morality possible:

Seeing the difference between now and not now, we can make the connection...To say that a good end will follow from a bad means is just like saying that if I pull a rope on this pulley it will lift the weight on that one. To break a promise is to deny the reality of the past; therefore it is to deny the hope of a real future. If time and reason are functions of each other, if we are creatures of time, then we had better know it, and try to make the best of it. To act responsibly. (187).

The consistency of means and ends is a reoccurring aspect in anarchist theory and activism, however as Cohn notes, this is usually not an epistemological stance but an *ethical* one. Le Guin extends this idea by showing how time plays a central role in making the ‘unethical’ separation of means and ends possible, with means being current action and ends being a consequence occurring later. By developing new understandings of time which do not separate action and consequence but also do not sacrifice ‘progress’ or linearity, this ‘unethical’ separation of means and ends is made problematic from an intellectual perspective as well as an ethical one. Therefore Le Guin suggests that a re-conception of time, in a psychological, cognitive, philosophical and ethical sense, is necessary for anarchist ethics and theory and imagines how anarchist means-ends coherence might be founded in *both* ethics and epistemology. In this way, Le Guin’s utopianism extends beyond the traditional concerns of social structure to suggest that, as always entwined with culture, Philosophy and knowledge production are also places for utopian transformation.

In keeping with this foregrounding of means and interrelationality, both of these critical utopias depict processes of conflict. For example in Mattapoisett interpersonal conflict is common and addressed through holding a “worming” in which members of the families or ‘core’ gather along with the people who are in conflict and a referee from another village in order to speak openly and critically about the individuals involved. Attempts are made to work through and resolve the conflict, temporarily forbid contact, or spend more time together understanding and trying to bond (Piercy 199). Such depictions of disagreement and conflict are in keeping with critical utopianism in which the process of working through problems is more important than attaining a state at which no such problems exist. Through depicting certain arguments between characters, with neither side ‘winning’ and both encouraged to instead try to understand the other, Piercy opts for a “dialectical unity of two positions” (Moylan, *Demand* 153). This emphasis on communication, and the training and socialisation in skills of verbal and non-verbal expression, is in part what makes the community ‘work’ (133). The implication is that conflict is not something to be avoided, but is rather naturalised as an aspect of human living and relating.

What conflict means in relation to harm, violence and social disorder is explored in both novels. Although on Anarres, as Shevek explains, “nobody was ever punished for anything” having found that “coercion is the least efficient means of obtaining order” he notes, somewhat euphemistically, that there are occasions when “they make you go away by yourself for a while” (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 124). The threat of community hostility is the naturally occurring consequence of harmful or annoying behaviour, for example, assault is likely to result in the perpetrator’s neighbours providing “summary revenge” which apparently acts enough as a deterrent. In Mattapoisett, approaches to justice seem more

officiated. The accused is given the choice to take responsibility for the act, or, if claiming accident or insanity then healing the person becomes the focus (Piercy 201). If intentionality is admitted a sentence is negotiated between the accused, the victim, their family and a mediating person: “our laws are simple and we don’t need lawyers. The jury decides. A sentence is negotiated by all the parties” (201). However for repeat murderers “we give up...We aren’t willing to live with people who choose to use violence. We execute them” (201). Luciente explains, “We don’t think it’s right to kill them. Only convenient. Nobody wants to stand guard over another” (359). In this sense, freedom is prioritised over the preservation of life and this also holds true for their engagement in war. Their willingness to kill people who are violent, including their engagement in war against remaining capitalists and cyborgs who threaten their borders, reflect the contentious anarchist argument that violence might be justified as an ends to freedom. The question of violence in utopia, even a critical utopia, seems contentious, particularly in utopias which otherwise assert congruence between means and ends.

Yet at the same time, as one character in *Woman on the Edge of Time* puts it “we care very much *how* things get done” (138). Again, what is important is apparently the ethical process, rather than the ‘outcome’. This also applies to governance, which is minimal in these fictional societies where power is dispersed as much as possible. In keeping with the realities of non-hierarchical groups, much of this involves long meetings and heated argument (Graeber, *Direct Action*). In Mattapoisett meetings are held to make decisions on controversial issues ranging from resource distribution, to conflict arising from love-triangles (this society is polyamorous), to questions about the “direction of science”, such as whether to work on life-extending medicines. Although decisions are made by councils in town meetings, everyone potentially affected attends, discusses and votes (Piercy, 268).

Mattapoisett has a “planning council” for the town of Mattapoisett which consists of twenty-five to thirty people between the ages of sixteen to extremely elderly, who Connie notes, are mostly people of colour, and many are women (143). They are chosen by lot and serve for a year “threemonth with the rep before you and three with the person replacing you and six alone” after which they are required to go and work in a humbler occupation such as shepherding (143). In Mattapoisett, inherent in the importance of process is the equitable distribution of power.

Similarly, in *The Dispossessed* numerous syndicates and committees are woven into the everyday living of Anarresti culture so that participation in decision-making is a normal part of life: “the meetings of such groups, the vehicles of both social action and sociability, were the framework of life in any small community” (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 91). While potentially tedious, it is posited as an improvement on highly hierarchical societies because the process of ‘how things get done’ is so important: in this case a fully participatory democracy is privileged above efficiency at all costs. Yet this is much easier said than done. Somewhat problematically, Anarres also comes to rely on forms of centralisation which contradict some of the initial anarchist intentions of their founders (82). However, it seems that in practice the Anarresti find themselves needing some kind of centralised coordination: “you can't have a nervous system without at least a ganglion, and preferably a brain. There had to be a center” and this comes in the form of Production and Distribution Coordination (PDC) and the computer system Divlab.

This text being a critical utopia, centralisation can be read as a ‘flaw’ in their anarchism which is never tidily solved, but rather must be worked through. This is made quite explicit when Le Guin explains that “from the start the Settlers were aware that that unavoidable centralization was a lasting threat, to be countered by lasting vigilance” (Le

Guin, *The Dispossessed* 82). Moylan refers to this as the “primary social problem” for Le Guin, the “danger of centralization of power in an elite group”, as well as the potential for ideals and revolution to be reduced into a dogmatic ideology (Moylan, *Demand* 100). To this end, centralization is constantly problematised in *The Dispossessed*; it is given a “counterpoint” or “anarchist corrective” in the local syndicates (97). The notion that power cannot be forever abolished but must be infinitely opposed is an argument frequently made by postanarchists following Foucault (discussed further in the next chapter) and in this sense *The Dispossessed* can be read along postanarchist lines (Call, “Postmodern Anarchism” 11).

One of Le Guin’s major concerns in *The Dispossessed* is how ideals and revolution can become “dogmatic ideology that itself inhibits further emancipatory activity” (Moylan, *Demand* 100). As Shevek’s friend Bedap laments,

We've let cooperation become obedience. On Urras they have government by the minority. Here we have government by the majority. But it is government! The social conscience isn't a living thing any more, but a machine, a power machine, controlled by bureaucrats! (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 139).

In a sense, this is similar to the ‘identity/difference’ argument and the ways in which fabricating a sense of ‘unity’ for political purposes (such as ‘woman’) can serve to obscure differences and power relations within such a group. Regardless of who fills the positions, the structures themselves allow power and bureaucracy to manifest anywhere that requires “expertise and a stable institution. But that stability gives scope to the authoritarian impulse” (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 140).

In trying to counter the developing conformist tendencies of Annaresti society, Shevek comes to act as a dissident. By crossing the only wall on Anarres, the one between Anarres and the space-port, dividing Anarres from the rest of the world, Shevek attracts the wrath of some of his fellows who denounce him as a traitor. Shevek's research and travels to Urras are in part an effort to destabilise his society, and the novel's open-ending can be read as suggestive of another possible future of Anarres—for better or worse. Shevek, who almost literally by crossing the wall, "breaks open the society, reasserts its revolutionary ideals, and thus restores the process of permanent revolution" carries Le Guin's assertion of the ideal of "anarchist freedom and permanent rebellion over against centralized systems. She keeps the utopian impulse alive while rejecting the stasis of any utopian system, even her own" (Moylan, *Demand* 101). The principles of 'breaking open' and of ongoing resistance to power and the continuousness of utopianism are prioritised above the creation of a single 'perfect' society. In another vein, this might also be read, and critiqued, as a celebratory commitment to individualism and individual autonomy.

By prioritising individual autonomy, these texts both reinforce *and* challenge capitalist or neoliberal discourses, revealing the inconsistencies within these dominant ideologies. Both texts depict the possibilities of individual choice over 'specialised' work such as scientific research, composing music, or healing. This is made possible through sharing necessary but less popular work such as cleaning, manual labour and childcare. Rather than obsessing over constant productivity, in Mattapoisett people engage in work that is either necessary and cannot be done by machines, or work they are compelled to do for reasons of enjoyment and satisfaction. Connie finds that people in Mattapoisett do not seem to work very much and are never in a hurry, yet Luciente insists that they are highly productive but that the work they do—growing food and making useful objects—doesn't

take up that much time except during Spring, Autumn or a crisis when they will work “til we drop”. This more closely resembles the peasant work day, rather than the factory worker’s, as it is variable and dependent on how much time it takes to do things, rather than an arbitrary set number of hours (Moylan, *Demand* 129).

Yet combined with this ‘backward’ glancing approach, Mattapoisett also makes high use of western science and technology to decrease work, rather than increase productivity (Moylan, *Demand* 129). Generally people work 4-16 hours per month which is in part made possible by the use of automation for tedious work such as stuffing pillows, mining or sewing repetitive patterns. The suggestion is that technology and science, while not neutral, can be used for different ends in different kinds of social arrangements. That is, in communalist societies it might be used to its fullest extent for the benefit of all members of that society. For example in Mattapoisett it makes it possible for everyone to take a sabbatical every seven years which means taking a year off production and being responsible only for family obligations: “some go study in their field. Some learn a language or travel. Hermit in the wilderness. Pursue some line of private research. Or paint. Or write a book” (Piercy, *Woman* 123). This is a strong contrast to capitalist societies in which science and technology is seen as a method of increasing productivity and profit which only serves the powerful.

On Anarres, life is in some ways less leisurely. Working days are longer than in Mattapoisett so that “most Anarrestis worked five to seven hours a day, with two to four days off each decad” (ten days) however there is freedom within this and “details of regularity, punctuality, which days off, and so on were worked out between the individual and his work crew or gang or syndicate or coordinating federative, on whichever level cooperation and efficiency could best be achieved” (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 156).

Different syndicates are responsible for different kinds of work (for example the press syndicate) and people can either join a syndicate or be posted to temporary jobs through the Divlab system and just “work up jobs where they wanted them, and joined a syndicate or formed one, and then registered with Divlab” (271). Shevek’s chosen work is in theoretical physics and so he is able to spend a significant amount of time working on his own research for long stretches, with the only exception being “for tenth-day duties and the usual janitorial assignments in his domicile and the laboratories” (91). Tenth-day duties involve the compulsory sharing of necessary drudgery such as digging a pipeline or doing intensive cleaning. In this way, Le Guin, like Piercy, explores how common good and necessity might exist harmoniously with individual fulfilment and aspiration, although, again this is a ‘problem’ which must be constantly worked through, rather than attaining a final ‘perfect balance’ or end-solution.

While in principle work for Anarresti is supposedly chosen, Le Guin apparently avoids the lure of neoliberal-style total individualism acknowledging that “the choices of the social being are never made alone” (*The Dispossessed* 223). While Shevek’s passion is for academic work in physics, he is drawn to practical and urgent work by the needs of his community. This ‘struggle’ between Shevek’s individualism and anarchist-communism becomes a central theme in the novel. In a sense, the plot of the novel revolves around Shevek’s changing work, from labouring in the dust on a planting project, to living alone and undertaking his own research, to working for emergency famine-prevention labour, and experiencing life as an esteemed professor in the luxury of Urras before returning again to Anarres. While Shevek finds it endlessly difficult to reconcile himself and his society, his own passion and the work his society needs done or values, he seems to oscillate between the two—his life is itself a constant returning. With no resolution, only process and action, Le Guin presents an

interesting response to how we can live as individuals and social beings: not a merging, but an oscillation. In *The Dispossessed* anarchism does not resolve identity/difference, individual/society dichotomies but it does prioritise a space for addressing these.

Yet perhaps the 'conflict' between individualism and communalism need not be so complicated as is sometimes presupposed. As Graeber argues,

One must be able to imagine oneself and others as integrated subjects in order to be able to produce beings that are in fact endlessly multiple; imagine some sort of coherent, bounded "society" in order to produce that chaotic, open ended network of social relations that actually exists. There is a contradiction here, perhaps, but most people in human history seem to have figured out a way to live with it. It does not ordinarily spark feelings of rage and despair, the perception that the social world is a hollow travesty or malicious joke. If, in capitalist societies, it often does, it can only be because of the peculiar intensity of the forms of structural violence it creates, and the warping and shattering of the imagination that are their inevitable effect. (Graeber, *Direct Action* 526).

That is, people must be individual *and* collective at once, and, although this seems somewhat paradoxical, it is perhaps capitalism in particular that makes this tension seem unresolvable. That is, the profoundly alienating forms of life capitalism engenders.

Moylan concludes that *The Dispossessed* perhaps reflects the conditions of the society from which it originated a little too much. Rather, it "does not sufficiently break with the limits of the phallo-cratic-capitalist system in its own formal practices, the novel ensures that the enclosure of life by the dominant system is preserved more than it is negated"

(*Demand* 119). In particular, Shevek's individualism, and Le Guin's centralisation of a single (and male, cis, heterosexual) character reinforces the androcentric and capitalist ideologies Le Guin seems to intend to oppose (119). Although *The Dispossessed* seems to assert utopia and radical activism it "actually expresses the continued closure of the current social formation of male supremacy, world capitalism, and bureaucratic hierarchy, coded in a narrative of convergence and individual transformation of reality" (116). Its circular imagery, the oscillating structure of the novel and the ideologies conveyed through the character of Shevek can therefore be read as expressions of "not the radical praxis of the late 1960s but rather the cooption of that energy by the forces of transnational capital" (Moylan, *Demand* 118). Again, of course Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* fails to solve the 'problem' of how to imagine the "totally radical" in the sense of an absolute break from the dominant culture. Yet, like *Woman*, it presents 'pieces' of alternative possibilities based on a variety of resistant and dominant discourses immanent in the culture.

There may be no 'grand solution', but there are presentations of the details of daily living which find affinity with the concerns of feminism. In both Mattapoisett and Anarres the sharing of reproduction and the production of social life means that neither society relies on the distribution of labour according to gender. Physical labour, research, negotiating, teaching and defence are all jobs carried out by women as well as men. This is perhaps in part made possible by the notions of family and kinship these cultures hold, in particular, communal child-rearing and polyamory/non-monogamy. On Anarres, while people can choose monogamy and live with a partner, and young children sometimes live with their parents, generally children tend to sleep in dormitories with their peers and are cared for collectively (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 30, 203). Education occurs both through

learning centres and by working alongside adults. Children come to refer to adults to whom they are close, in familial terms, regardless of biological connections.

In Mattapoisett there is no monogamy or nuclear family structure at all, and individuals have as many close friends and lovers, “sweet friends” as they like, and a “base” or “family” of multiple adults and children, raising children communally (Piercy, *Woman* 72). Elderly people are the primary teachers of children in part because they believe that “old people and children are kin. There’s more space at both ends of life. That closeness to birth and to death makes a common concern with big questions and basic patterns” (124). More radically, however, Piercy seeks to set ‘free’ female bodies from their biology, and utilise eugenic technologies in order to eliminate racism and break biological ties. It is explained to a sceptical Connie that they decided to break the bonds between genes and culture forever in order to eliminate racism by breeding a higher proportion of darker-skinned people and mixing everyone through the population. Yet cultural difference is maintained, so that some people in black tribes are white, and there are black Jews, black Italians and black Chinese (96). This constitutes an attempt at a difficult balance which reflects the struggle of assimilation versus diversity as “we want there to be no chance of racism again. But we don’t want the melting pot where everyone ends up with thin gruel. We want diversity, for strangeness breeds richness” (97). That “strangeness breeds richness” might be taken more widely as a principle of utopianisms which embrace plurality and diversity, instead of harmony and control.

Yet curiously this emphasis on difference does not extend to gender. The only ‘gendered’ term Piercy uses is ‘co-mother’, yet when there are no ‘fathers’ or concept of gender, the word no longer signifies gender at all. This comes about through both cultural and technological ends. In future Mattapoisett, no one gives birth, and females and males

alike raise children and breastfeed (126), arguably a feminist or queer utopian vision for a genderless society brought about by using technologies to alter biological make-up.

Apparently inspired by Shulamith Firestone's argument in the *Dialectic of Sex* that women's oppression is not just cultural and social, but also biological (Moylan, *Demand* 135), this is implied as a necessity if gender equality (or elimination) is to be achieved. Luciente explains that this was "part of women's long revolution[...]when we were breaking all the old hierarchies" because

Finally there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we had, in return for no more power for anyone. The original production: the power to give birth. Cause as long as we were biologically enchained, we'd never be equal. And males would never be humanized to be loving and tender. So we all became mothers. Every child has three. To break the nuclear bonding. (Piercy 97)

Without repeating the pros and cons of this perspective, and delving into the fascinating and complex details of how culture, socialisation and biology interact, the point is that in the very attempt to try to reimagine reproduction and family life, Piercy is suggesting that anarcha-feminist alternatives are conceptualisable. That is, the very simple point that any given set of cultural and historical circumstances can be resisted. However, Piercy does not leave these practices and their potentials uncriticised.

Yet what in part makes Piercy's utopia active and engaged is not the unproblematic presentation of an alternative, but Connie's scepticism towards Mattapoisettian ways of life. McBean notes how Connie's initial resistance and scepticism is not just a way of testing and

proving the superiority of Mattapoissett but rather, challenges the idea that Mattapoissett is a more 'progressive' future. This is also tied up with problematising notions of linear time and progress as "to resist Mattapoissett as her future is to resist seeing her present as locatable principally as Mattapoissett's past" (48). By doing so, McBean argues, she is also challenging the western notion of progress more broadly, and the ways in which feminism problematically privileges western women and western feminism and implies that non-western women and feminisms are less 'advanced'—a linear view of progress which underlies the ways in which the story of western feminism (and its various waves) are told (Allen 521; McBean 48). Connie's hesitance and criticism (towards in vitro reproduction for example) might be read as a refusal to be situated in Mattapoissett's 'past' in a linear narrative of progress (McBean 49). It is also exactly this which makes Piercy's utopia a *critical* one, as Piercy plays with notions of time, linearity and 'progress'.

Although Connie appears entirely shocked to find herself in Mattapoissett, and never suggests that she is hallucinating or has hallucinated, there are some early indicators that this future has its basis in her own past, her memories and her life experiences. For example, Connie is surprised to see that in Mattapoissett many of the buildings are shabby, small, randomly scattered and overgrown with vines, people are mostly travelling on bicycles or by foot, clothes hang on washing lines, there are ordinary cows, chickens free ranging and large vegetable gardens (Piercy 63). Reminded of her own family's background, Connie is disappointed in the 'backwardness' of this supposedly future society exclaiming that "this place is like my Tio Manuel's in Texas. A bunch of wetback refugees! Goats, chickens running around, a lot of huts scavenged out of real houses" (64). She feels that she is "stuck back home on the farm. Peons again! Back on the same old dunghheap with ten

chickens and a goat. That's where my grandparents scratched out a dirt-poor life!" (64). In this instance, Connie sees her own life experiences in Mattapoisett as if Mattapoisett is made out of her memories.

In this sense, Piercy might be read as repeating the anarchist adage that the new world will be built in the shell of the old (Shantz 91; el-Ojeili 231). Piercy overtly explores this relationship between the 'old world' and the 'new world' and as contingent on one another. Connie's utopian visions affect her 'real' (old) life: made mentally stronger and "trained in the skills of revolutionary struggle" and "recruited to the cause that affects the village of the future and the hospital ward of the present," Connie's is able to challenge the dominant power structure (Moylan, *Demand* 144). The main point of the text, according to Moylan, is not the content of Mattapoisett but "rather the impact of utopian dreams and experience on the protagonist that is the primary utopian mechanism" (151). There are so many points at which these different 'worlds' merge, that it is possible to question whether it is reasonable to separate 'present' and 'future', or the current and the utopian at all.

For example, there are obvious parallels between communal living in Mattapoisett, and the hospital. It is

filled with big tables seating perhaps fifteen at each ...The scene was livelier than institutional feeding usually made for. A child was climbing on a bench to tell a story, waving both arms. At the far end a man with a mustache was weeping openly into his soup and all about him people were patting his shoulders and making a big fuss. People were arguing heatedly, laughing and telling jokes, and a child was singing loudly at the table nearest the door. Really, this could be a dining room in a madhouse, the way people sat naked with their emotions pouring out, but there was

a strong energy level here. The pulse of the room was positive but a little overwhelming ...Why wasn't it noisier? Something absorbed the sound, muted the voices shouting and babbling, the scraps of melody and laughter, the calls, the clatter of dishes and cutlery, the scraping of chairs on the floor (Piercy 68).

There are explicit references to the institution—"institutional feeding" and "a madhouse"—and in some ways this scene might be read as a representation of Connie's experience in the institution extrapolated into utopian form. In Connie's time, 'naked emotions', weeping, shouting and babbling are often interpreted as signs of mental illness. The walls which absorb the sound recall padded walls or the numbing effects of medication. One might wonder whether there are seeds of utopianism in the institution, which comes from the solidarity and "shared suffering" (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 53) which develops between patients, described elsewhere in the novel. Piercy's utopian text is not revolutionary because it depicts utopia 'elsewhere', but because of her commitment to the immanence of resistance and alternatives.

Because Mattapoisett is not an inevitable future but has a dystopic alternative worse than Connie's present (Moylan, *Demand* 136), Piercy implies that human action in the present can determine future possibilities. It is in part Connie's actions in her present, most profoundly, her poisoning the medical staff who are trying to forcefully operate on her brain, which allows Mattapoisett to exist in the future. Through obtaining a deadly concoction of chemicals used in agriculture Connie uses science, the weapon of the powerful, against power—turning it against itself (142). In this way, Piercy shows the need to resist centralisation of power and also the need for violent struggle and throughout the novel violence done to women and the institutionalised (including violence of men, the

state, and psychiatric institutions) are not passively accepted but countered by Connie's "guerrilla action" (125). Similarly, in the future, counter-violence is still necessary to defeat power which Moylan reads as an adoption of the tactics of "Third World struggles in their insistence on sabotage and guerrilla war to achieve the revolution" (125). In other words, knowledge that alternative futures are possible demands *action*.

From childcare to decision-making, Piercy and Le Guin depict thorough and convincing illustrations of anarchist feminist living. However many problems are left deliberately unresolved and it is important to keep in mind that, as Shevek says, "we don't want purity, but complexity...*It is not the answer we are after, but only how to ask the question*" (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 187) (italics mine). Likewise, to demand that anarchism produces utopian blueprints is misplaced when it is perhaps equally interested in working out how to ask the question. While Le Guin provides a way of illustrating anarchism as process, Anarres is not a blueprint utopia, but a place to begin asking important questions. Connie's exploration or imagination of Mattapoisett similarly raises questions, not just about the 'best' ways in which to organise a society, but about the thin line between dreams and reality, the medicalisation of those who challenge this line, and the place of marginalisation for thinking utopically. In both of these novels, although society and culture are the subject of these stories, each also foregrounds individual subjectivity through the characters of Connie and Shevek in particular. Moylan claims that Piercy's call for personal transformation of each individual is a feminist one (*Demand* 126), and Call reads Le Guin's emphasis on social power as inscribed on the individual along postanarchist or post-structural lines. The interest in self and subjectivity has clearly become foregrounded in radical utopian visions and critical theory and it is to this preoccupation that I now turn.

Chapter Four: Poststructural Theory, Anarchism and Subjectivity

Just as feminist utopian fiction can be considered a practice of theorising, as well as an action of utopianism or oppositional practice, academic theory can be read as a form of utopian action in the academic world. In this chapter I return to the realm of academic theory to consider anarchist and utopian principles of theorising. Against accusations that postmodern and poststructural theory is necessarily 'apolitical', by reading poststructural and postmodern theories as anarchist, I situate postmodern theorising as politically active. This requires an interrogation of the postmodern concern with identity and subjectivity in critical theories. That is, a critique of the postmodern 'merging' of politics and culture, the concern with subjectivity and 'micro' struggles of everyday life, which deviates from older leftist or socialist aims which were party and unity focussed (el-Ojeili 211). It is arguable that defining struggle in terms of 'identity' (admittedly a contentious concept) is detrimental to collective politics in that it has the effect of splitting groups into smaller and smaller factions. At least from some angles, a focus on difference and identities is rather too compatible with a neoliberal logic of individuation (Grace 16).

These are complicated discussions which will be further explored in Part Three, and in this chapter I simply wish to draw attention to the existence of discussions about subjectivity as a part of these critical discourses which I am framing as 'utopian'. Reading these theories as both utopian and concerned with subjectivity allows me to examine two particular themes connected with utopianism: alterity, and will. That is, utopianism as 'otherness' and 'difference' or novelty, versus utopianism as 'willed transformation' which rests on the idea that humans can bring about change through intentional action. As

indicated, and as I will explore more closely in Part Two of the thesis, I am seeking to explore and problematise this latter characteristic of utopianism. In this chapter I first argue that postmodern and poststructural theory can be read as utopian and political when it is situated as anarchist. I then explore the postmodern interest in identity and difference, self and subjectivity. I question the extent to which this focus on particularity reinforces dominant postmodern discourses (the move of the utopian and political away from the social and cultural, and towards the self) or suggests a form of radical alterity, and how this manifests in some feminist discourses. I look at Luce Irigaray's use of both boundaries and the notion of self to explore some of these questions.

As should be clear, my intention here is to argue that postmodern academic theory is not complicated or mystical when it is approached with a view towards asking what it is trying to *do*. One way of putting this, drawing on utopian theory, is that it can be read for the kinds of 'worlds' it is trying to bring about and what claims about reality are being made. In a sense this rests on the assumption that the (im)possible and the actual are not easily separable. In contrast to those who disparage postmodern theory for its disengagement with the 'real' world, I offer that it might be read as active, and that its realm of action is theory or thought. Perceptions of this kind of theory as impractical may be grounded in a misunderstanding of the imaginative, alterity-focussed and utopian aspects of postmodern theories, as well as an overestimation of the capabilities of language and representation in general. That is, I do not presuppose that language, theories and representation reflect the 'real' world, or that these can bring about social change merely by recommending practical actions. Rather, critical theories can be read as, like feminist utopian fiction, attempts at 'transforming consciousness'.

Following Jameson, I am using the term 'postmodernism' here to refer simultaneously to a 'cultural dominant', an era, and a style of thought or philosophy. So inextricable is postmodernism with capitalism, that Jameson, in his book *Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Capitalism*, claims that every position on postmodernism in culture (whether critical or celebratory) is also an implicit or explicit stance on the nature of multinational capitalism (3). Admittedly, to speak of "postmodernism" seems to risk the same kind of grand theorising or grand narrative of history which, according to postmodern theorists such as Lyotard, is no longer possible (Holland 8). Further, as Jameson puts it, announcing to be 'post' anything bears "a strong family resemblance to all those more ambitious sociological generalisations which, at much the same time, bring us the news of the arrival and inauguration of a whole new type of society" and seem to have the "obvious ideological mission of demonstrating, to their own relief, that the new social formation in question no longer obeys the laws of classical capitalism", thereby rendering irrelevant class struggle (*Postmodernism* 3). But to resist the effort to try and make sense of the cultural world in which we find ourselves may function more in the interests of the dominant cultural discourse, which is one which happens to benefit from ideas of difference, and the notion that power somehow does not exist (3). It is necessary, then, to try and sketch out some kind of model of a cultural dominant to use as a tool to resist the view of present history as simply random difference, heterogeneity, distinct forces and an un-patterned future (3; el-Ojeili 24). This is in part entangled with the fact that emphasising plurality and undecidability over structure seems to work in favour of the naturalisation of capitalism and neoliberalism. Such fluid and fracturing perspectives can work to exclude critical discourses which are founded on conceptualising oppressions not as totally random or the result of individual action, but as structural and systematic. In this sense, to talk of "postmodernism"

might be a kind of strategy, much like using the term ‘woman’ as a political category, and does not presuppose any ‘essential’ identity because there is none to presuppose. Instead, these are terms which can be *used* to try to make sense of contradictory and consistent cultural expressions across art, politics, theory, media, pop culture, the built environment, ways of living, subjectivity and economics.

Drawing from the work of Jameson, Baudrillard, Deleuze and Davies the particular features I am ‘drawing a line around’ (Wittgenstein, in Heyes) in order to talk about ‘postmodern culture’ relate to depthlessness, the dominance of the image or simulacrum, auto-referentiality, the fixation on identity and the proliferation of difference, which will be discussed further in Part Three. Yet this fragmentation, repetition and proliferation of difference is not the same as the utopian ‘alterity’ apparently sought by many theorists and authors. For example, for Baudrillard, the postmodern era can be conceptualised by mutations of objects and the environment which are irreversible because of an inbuilt absence of the kind of alterity which can create meaningful change (Grace 83). As Bennett also puts it more succinctly in relation to material objects and commercialism, “too much stuff in too quick succession equals the fast ride from object to trash” (Bennett, “Steps” 350). Characterised by repetition and ‘trash’ postmodern culture might be said to be absent of ‘meaning’ and even of hope. Its mutations tend towards greater homogenisation of elements into virtual processes of functionalisation and the increasing digitisation and electronisation of human bodily actions (Bishop and Phillips 143). I take these to mean: disembodiment of human movement, a general turn “inwards”, and increased specificity which seems somehow at least thematically similar to patterns of broader cultural sentiments relating to neoliberal individualisation and the diminishing of collective action. In

a word, 'particularity'. This can be traced throughout a number of different critical theories in relation to identity, difference, self and subjectivity.

The Anarchy of Postmodern Theory

Given that postmodern theories are always to some extent stances on late-capitalism (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 3) they perhaps risk reinforcing those characteristics of repetition, auto-referentiality, particularity, homogenisation and depthlessness which seem antithetical to mounting political critique and action. That is, because post-structuralism rejects all absolute meaning it arguably renders everything meaningless, relativist and apolitical (Call "A is for Anarchy" 159). However to make such a criticism assumes a particular view of what politics 'is'. As Derrida might ask, who gets to decide what is 'properly' political, and what is a superfluous 'distraction from the greater cause', and is this not political in itself? Poststructuralists argue that deconstruction *is* political but its subject matter is not representative politics or gender or class, but something else: the construction of knowledge and identity through language which is of course also always intertwined with cultural and social oppressions (Grosz 68). Viewed in anarchist terms shows the theoretical deconstruction of hierarchies and simplistic dichotomies to be a subversive action against authoritative and rigid systems of knowledge and language which underlie domination. The possibility that language can be recreated is disruptive to the certainties which justify dominant social policy, and this makes possible rethinking society (Atkinson 77).

In another sense, deconstructive thought can provoke growth and 'improvement' of critical theories. Because deconstruction insists that no system, method or discourse can be all-powerful or all encompassing, concepts can be, in fact must be, rethought (Grosz 61).

This is necessary for feminism, for example, because feminism is always already entwined with patriarchy. Without recognising this, feminism will remain “unable to recognize the very implications it believes it has repudiated” (61). Because of this potential, Derrida insists that deconstruction is actually a kind of “double affirmation” and for feminism, according to Grosz, this means ‘saying yes’ to both feminism and patriarchy, because feminism is already tied up with patriarchy. For Derrida, language has no fixed, static, or transcendent meaning, rather words attain meaning from relationships to other words, rather than from an external, stable concept (Jun 142) (for example, ‘woman’ means ‘not man’). One of the most important contributions Derrida has made, particularly important for feminist theory, is the unsettling of the binaries which are said to form the basis of western thought, and justify its atrocities (143). Power is only known through its effects, according to Foucault, and similarly for Derrida, binary oppositions are manifestations of relations of power (144). The effort to reveal and deconstruct these hierarchical binaries is an anarchist act as it seeks to transform the immediate textual and symbolic environment into a more equal and open one in which new potentials may be realized.

Postmodern theories are sometimes viewed as trivial and disengaged from ‘serious’ politics and academic work. Soper accuses postmodern theories of “refusing to do anything but play” (qtd. in Atkinson, 74). Play may actually be paramount to theory which hopes to disrupt a boring and destructive status quo and envision something different. This is rather like utopianism which seeks to be playful and subversive in a way which must be seen as at once fun and deadly serious (Cevalasco 62). Through ‘playing with’ and loosening the binaries of gender or race or other ‘identities’ which restrict our lives, postmodern theories contribute to emancipation because destabilising language and identity can create the kind of critique which might push along social and cultural change (Atkinson 76). This ‘play’, irony

and subversion is considered by postmodern anarchists to be strategic because subverting and re-appropriating dominant discourses can annihilate their power, creating other possibilities in the process (Eckert 77). This might be seen as compatible with the utopian method of 'excavation' of 'crypto-utopias' in dominant discourses (Levitas, *Utopia* 153; Jacques 31): seeking out the crypto-utopias suggested by dominant discourses and appropriating these, playing with them, to create other utopias (what Levitas terms the 'architectural' mode).

In any case, the interest of left communist and anarchist theorists with 'trivial' things like play, sex and desire is part of a larger concern with "*the revolutionary alteration of daily life*" (el-Oleili 230). That is, for such postmodern theorists, it is at the level of the everyday, rather than 'high' politics and great industrial disputes as orthodox socialists hold, that opposition should occur (230). The 'everyday' is a source of both alienation, and "powerful but unacknowledged potentialities for a new mode of being, a potentially prefigurative realm in which the struggle for a new existence can begin" which is why "left communists have sought the new world within the crumbling shell of the old" and why "anarchists have tended to be far more attentive than Marxists to the importance of the cultural and the need to change everyday life" (231) which is perhaps why anarchist theory seems so compatible with postmodern theories. The emphasis on changing the 'everyday' details of social life is, as we have seen, characteristic of anarcha-feminist utopianism (Chapter Three).

As I argued in Chapter Two, theory and theorising can be considered part of anarchist praxis. Reading postmodern or poststructural theorising in particular as anarchist and utopian, might provide a way in which postmodern theorising might be politically conceptualised. In "standing against the fantasies of grand narratives, recoverable pasts, and predictable futures" (Stronach and MacLure qtd. in Atkinson 74) poststructural and

postmodern theories can be interpreted as anarchism within the realm of theory. What Eckert calls an 'Anarchy of thought' includes philosophers such as Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida as anarchist for the ways in which they theorize in anti-hierarchical ways, and also because the content of their philosophies often directly addresses and challenges power and authority (Eckert 72; Jun 134). This is not an appropriation of these philosophies; as Jun notes, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, along with many other intellectuals of their time, were radicalized by anarchist activism of May 1968, and it is known that Deleuze, Guattari and Derrida were political activists (Jun 133). Regardless of how 'practically effective' for oppositional political practice, the roots of postmodern and poststructural theorising are in the desire to challenge dominant discourses.

This line of thinking has given rise to the (contested) term, or body of thought, referred to as "postanarchism" (Kuhn 21). Postmodern anarchist theory embraces the dynamic, plural and subversive aspects of postmodernism in order to engage with, appropriate and counter the particularities of politics and culture in the 21st century (Call, "Postmodern Anarchism" 3). Eckert, quoting Adams, understands 'postanarchism' as a term which refers to an alliance of radically anti-authoritarian poststructuralist theory, which although "developed and mutated and split off into dozens of hybrid critical theories over the past three decades" are now returning to converge, influence and extend the theory-practice of one of its "primary roots" (qtd. in Eckert 71). Arguably, there is nothing 'post' about this kind of anarchism, as anarchism has always been a movement of flux and plurality, and it is not clear what aspects of anarchism postanarchists want to reject (Kuhn 22). Perhaps it is again, a greater focus on particularities, as, according to Eckert, postmodern anarchism seeks to "reinvent everyday life and identities" (Eckert 73) adding to anarchism a critique of what humans can *be*, and a non-essential 'human nature', departing

from classical anarchists who saw human nature in essentialist terms (Jun 137). Unlike Marxism and versions of classical anarchism postmodern anarchism does not hold to the ideal of an end goal or end-state (Jun 132), rather the message of postmodern anarchism is that “the world cannot be saved through the articulation of a rational revolutionary philosophy” (Call, “Postmodern Anarchism” 12) but rather, consists of permanent, ongoing, open-ended dialogue about possibilities for anarchist thought in our era (14).

Like utopianism, contesting power must be continuous, and postmodern anarchist theorists tend to adopt Foucault’s view of power as productive and multifarious (Eckert 73). Power emanates from multiple sources (not just from capital and the state, as classical anarchists believed) and so cannot be abolished through political emancipation alone. Power is never ‘conquered’, the anarchist project is never ‘completed’, rather, like utopianism it is open-ended and best viewed as a process rather than an end goal (Jun 146). Postmodern anarchists therefore view power as productive as well as repressive, and not something which can be overthrown in order to begin building a better world (140), but a force to resist creatively. The symbolic order which produces oppression is at the same time, the foundation for its resistance (Eckert 73, 80). For example, systems of centralization in *The Dispossessed* and the conformity of the Anarresti is not magically eliminated, but the tendency towards dogmatic ideology must be continually resisted (Moylan, *Demand* 100).

Centralisation, in terms of both power and knowledge, is replaced by privileging the plural and the particular in many postmodern theoretical accounts. For example, Deleuze’s interest in avoiding closure, entrapment and structure, to instead “open up, rather than foreclose possibilities, to liberate rather than interrupt the flows and movements which produce life” (Jun 134) can also be read as anarchist. Following the likes of Deleuze,

postmodern anarchism rejects normativity and instead returns to a Spinozian ethics which is concerned with the many different ways in which lives can be lived, rather than with rationality and 'utopian' perfection (139). Further, as May argues, Deleuze is committed to promoting the flourishing of alternative practices and avoiding representing others to themselves (who they are and what they want) as expertism and electoral politics do, thus undermining authority (qtd. in Jun 139). Deleuze also rejects the notion of a 'natural' hierarchy of values among individuals, instead holding that each human is a result of complicated, multiple, uniquely combined forces so that there are as many standards of excellence as there are people (140). Such emphases on potentials, becoming and alterity are utopian, in the sense that these perspectives involve the seeking of new possibilities and potential transformations, the hope for the 'not yet'. Moreover, it is the kind of utopian subjectivity which refuses singular, perfect ideals in favour of plurality, diversity and alterity.

Yet this focus on fluidity, plurality and diversity in postmodern theories has also been criticised for decentering certain political platforms and revolutionary goals in ways which seem sometimes incompatible with critical theories such as feminism (Grosz 60). For example, Alice Jardine argues that deconstruction is an attempt to "occupy all specific subject positions—to speak as woman, as man, as decentred, as centred—opportunistically seeking any position momentarily or strategically while remaining committed to none" (65). In other words, theorists such as Derrida do not 'admit' their own masculine subjectivity, but can appropriate femininity from positions of male privilege. Along similar lines, Irigaray accuses Derrida, and also Deleuze, of appropriating a 'feminine discourse' and argues that this is an attempt to continue dominating all discourse and displacing women. According to Irigaray, male theorists should speak in a 'masculine' discourse and admit they are doing so (Grosz 67). Perhaps even more problematically, drawing on Baudrillard, Grace criticizes

Deleuzian theory for its reflection of capitalist economy. She points out that the nomadic subject “has some uncanny similarities to the perfect, flexible corporate citizen of the transnational global economy” (Grace 56). In other words, the characteristics and strategies of postmodern theorists, poststructuralists and postanarchists seem so similar to the postmodern or late-capitalist environment from which they have originated, that their ability to be ‘critical’ or ‘alternative’ (or utopian) is questionable.

Self, Subjectivity and Identity in Postmodern and Anarchist Theories

Indeed, consistent with the postmodern ‘inward turn’, post(modern)anarchism engages with ideas about identity and self in ways which might seem to reinforce neoliberalism and individualism. It is easy to conclude that ‘self’ and ‘diversity’ is simply part of a capitalism which thrives on difference, and the need to assign identity categories like objects whose value is attained through exchange (Grace 16). Yet the search for, or construction of, a “main cause” or overarching narrative seems equally politically oppressive where it privileges certain kinds of struggle or identities (for example gender, over race) over others. In the context of a discussion on utopianism and critical theory/political change I see this as important for two reasons. Firstly, because of how utopianism has arguably moved from the social sphere to the private or realm of the “self” (Bauman, “Utopia” 23). Secondly, because of how a number of movements such as feminism, LGBTIQA cultures, various forms of anarchism, and even environmentalist practices such as veganism, engage with autonomy and identity as both routes to, and goals of political and cultural change. I am trying to at once take seriously two opposing views. On the one hand that “identity” is individualistic and divisive of collective political movements, and on the other, that identity

is the foundation of these and impossible to escape—that there is no ‘greater cause’ that transcends “identity”.

Adding to the complexity of the discussion is the fact that identity and individualism might be experienced as liberating from homogenous cultural forces, especially identities collectively claimed (such as queer, black, indigenous). McManus argues that in the stagnancy of current times when imagining that life could be otherwise is so difficult to do, “a pivotal moment” is “the cognitive, creative, and affective capacities of the subject, as she recognises herself as constituted, for sure, but also a constituent part of a world and a history that remains in process” (McManus). McManus advocates ‘utopian techniques of the *self*’ (such as dreaming and wonder) which means acknowledging and using a concept of selfhood or the individual, but in such a way that includes understandings of the self as not entirely self-determining and autonomous, and yet capable of, perhaps in Bruno Latour’s sense, having agency, just like other human and nonhuman actants. In any case, regardless of the extent to which it is ‘culturally constructed’ through capitalist and patriarchal discourse, or whether it is a ‘natural’ aspect of the ‘human condition’, the experience of being an individual, and living as isolated, individualistic neoliberal subjects, is a reality for many in the western world. While this might not be always *ideal* for socialism, feminism and ecopolitics, it is *an* ideal (capitalist, neoliberal, or simply dissident) which has *become* real—a reality with which critical theories and counter discourses or movements must now work.

The Utopian Self?

With declining interest or hope in theorising about the possibilities for a collective emancipatory politics, in current western culture utopianism has moved from the social to the self. According to Bauman, utopia has become “an aim to be pursued individually, and as a series of happy moments succeeding each other—not as a steady state” (Bauman, “Utopia” 23). Extending on Bauman, Hollow argues that in the postmodern era utopianism manifests in the individual lifestyle, and has moved away from theorising about the possibilities for collective good (20). Positive psychology and self-improvement, for example, might be seen as exemplary of this kind of individualistic utopianism. As Cederström and Spicer put it, “what is crucial is not what you have achieved, but what you can become. What counts is your potential self, not your actual self” (Cederström and Spicer 21). The self now becomes a site of utopian potential and the solution to social and individual suffering.

Striving for self-improvement can be viewed as preventative of social change and revolution. McGee claims that in the present day, ‘self-help’ is the opposite of collective action (McGee 18). Brabazon, quoting Susan Benson, also notes feminist concerns that “when the self becomes a focus and project there must be a cost to community-based strategies of political resistance such as feminism” (Brabazon 68). ‘Working out’ replaces work, and “Engels’ factory floor of exploitation, inequality and burgeoning working-class consciousness is overwritten by a figure factory, building a better self, rather than a political movement” (Brabazon 70). More fundamentally, feminist theorists such as Naomi Scheman argue that the very construction of the individual self, on which psy-sciences are based, pertains to a ‘masculine’ mode of being, which in turn depends on a need to separate oneself from the mother, and is maintained through the nuclear family structure and the capitalist system which divides families into individuals whose labour can be alienated from themselves, their families, communities and their home (240).

It would seem, then, that the idea of the individual is not a neutral claim, but one rooted in western patriarchal capitalism. Or to put it another way, individual *identity* functions as part of capitalism's modes of alienation and determining of value. For Baudrillard, identity functions to reinforce a capitalist economic mode of thinking in which identities are necessary for exchange and profit. That is, objects must be differentiated from each other and assigned identities only for the purpose of assigning economic value and equivalence (Grace 16). Grace argues that this model of relating has infiltrated other areas of culture, including the construction of gender, personality and sexuality. Arguably this means that theorists and activists seeking to challenge patriarchy, capitalism and neoliberalism by trying to build identity based movements, are reinforcing the discourses they seek to undermine.

One response is that perhaps there are other ways of understanding autonomy, self-control and self-determination, and perhaps the proponents of neoliberalism should not have control over what these terms mean and how they can be practised (Fournier 202). At least historically, foregrounding the 'self' and individual differences, has led to social change (Cederström and Spicer) and the popularity of self-improvement literature suggests discontent in such a way that might be understood as 'pre-political' protest (McGee). Neoliberalism might be seen as a discourse which appropriates notions of choice and self-determination to control and limit what they entail, but there are ways of understanding or presenting the 'self' which might be more challenging to patriarchal capitalism. For postmodern anarchist theorists, investigating the notion of 'self' can mean deconstructing identity as a manifestation of power so that an individual can become "not oneself", and replacing this with an understanding of the interconnectedness of humans and social relations, which the concept of 'identity' precludes (Eckert 74). From the perspective of

Deleuze and Guattari, the self is already multiple and can be thought of, felt and practised as “a peculiarly condensed group (of impulses or individuals)” (de Acosta 31). The different ‘masks’ or ‘impulses’ a person expresses can be seen in anarchist terms: “we make ourselves in the practices that make us and *that process is anarchy*, the anarchy of impulse and the ways of living that express or designate it” (31). This means that the ‘self’ is basically anarchist, and anarchist principles which apply to people collectively, might also be applied at the individual level perhaps providing a launching pad for more collective forms of anarchism.

Scholars of anarcho-queer and queer anarchist thought theorise some of the ways in which anarchist thought might be applicable to lived experience, identity, embodiment, gender and sexuality. Like anarchism, queer identities and practices threaten existing power structures and queer theory opposes mainstream consumptive and capitalist culture, including the co-option of gay politics into consumption and domesticity, and the resulting depoliticisation of gay and queer identities (Brown 201). That is, there is a shared interest in opposing the state and other oppressive institutions (through for example, gay marriage as a way to make queerness ‘safe’ and apolitical, by drawing it into contractual heteronormative, mononormative and patriarchal structures). Queer theory aims to deconstruct totalising notions and because identity is a category through which oppression works, making anarchist and queer critique a likely alliance, and a potent combination (Eckert 74).

Like anarcha-feminists, queer anarchists further develop anarchist ideas by drawing attention to identity and embodiment. This means “a commitment to diversity as an ethical stance in itself, in sharp contrast to the standardisation and regulation of state and bureaucratic rationales” (Heckert and Cleminson 3). Heckert and Cleminson suggest that

beginning with the self is nonetheless political because “in listening to our own bodies, our own desires, as well as to others (human and non-human), perhaps we can all come to imagine our own lives” while also understanding that “freedom is relational: one person’s freedom is inseparable from another’s freedom” (4). Here, ‘diversity’ and ‘the individual’ is set in opposition to the state and bureaucratic discourses which dominate society, though it is not clear how and to what extent this challenges other dominant discourses within capitalism, patriarchy and heteronormativity.

Similarly feminist discourses often emphasise autonomy, self-empowerment, self-actualization and choice in ways which are not set in opposition to postfeminism and neoliberalism. This might be seen as problematic to the extent that it does not allow feminism to detach itself enough from the dominant discourses, thereby compromising its revolutionary potential. Gill questions the very interest in choice and autonomy asking “why is acknowledging cultural influence deemed shameful? Conversely, why are autonomous choices so fetishized?” (Gill, “Critical Respect” 73). For Gill, this focus on autonomy and individualism “remains complicit with, rather than critical of, postfeminist and neoliberal discourses that see individuals as entrepreneurial actors who are rational, calculating and self-regulating” (74). In fact, more generally, it is difficult to accept anarchism’s emphasis on autonomy, choice, self-determination and individuality without seeing some neoliberal parallels (Bookchin, “Social Anarchism” 4) .

At the same time, feminist theorists certainly do not wish to contribute to the tendency to view women’s behaviours as simply passive outcomes of external influence by undermining agency (Gill, “Critical Respect” 71). Furthermore, although this focus on the self has been criticised as anti-communal (Brabazon 70; McGee 18) it does not seem currently possible of productive to *eliminate* the self, the situated body and identity from

utopian thinking, critical theory and social change. In an article “The Situated Self and Utopian Thinking”, Johnson draws on Benhabib’s conception of the ‘situated self’ and argues for the possibility of “reconfiguring the utopian as situated on the order of embodiment” (23). That is, all persons speak from a place, a perspective and a body which is the site of identity, oppression and constraint (35). It is also a site of dispute, critique and transformation, and in this sense can be seen as utopian (35). In this way, interrogating, reforming and affirming what ‘self’ and identity can mean, and re-situating it within the domain of collective politics, might be a feminist utopian act.

‘Identity politics’

Identities understood *collectively* may mean something quite different from individualistic notions of identity. Under this kind of view, identity is always about identifying with a *group*, rather than existing as an isolated individual. Intersectional theories elucidate this point. While critics argue that intersectionality is divisive, it arguably reveals that identity groups are made up of coalitions (Carathasis 942). According to Carathasis, “political coalitions that attend to multiple forms of oppression help their members to integrate their identities as people—identities that through systemic oppression and monocular resistance movements have been fragmented, distorted, repressed, or negated” (943). The question is not how these aspects can be integrated, but rather, how they have come to be understood as separate in the first place. As Crenshaw puts it, “any attempt to mobilize identity is a negotiation of the various political interests, conflicting though they may be, that exist within an identity category” (qtd. in Carathasis

947). In this way, identity groups are always constructed and done so through negotiating the vast array of diverse experiences within both individual persons and groups.

Importantly intersectionality is *not* about identity and difference, but rather about power. That is, it is not difference *itself* that is important and as Cho and colleagues explain, “if critics think intersectionality is a matter of identity rather than power, they cannot see which differences make a difference. Yet it is exactly our analyses of power that reveal which differences carry significance” (Cho et al. 798). That is to say, a focus on power rather than identity shows which differences matter. All differences are not equal “there is an infinite array of differences in the world. The very identification of certain traits - gender, class, age, sexual preference, ethnic background- as more important than others - shoe size, ability to sing in tune - necessarily involves an appeal to intersubjective norms” (Felski 16). This seems to deviate from the capitalist and some postmodern reifications of difference in which any difference is as good as another, because it is *difference* which produces value. All differences are not equal and intersectionality and structural critique identify what differences matter. In other words, identity must be put in *context* because differences abstracted become free-floating signs with no meaning beyond ‘difference’ itself.

Yet even in ‘context’, all structural identities are abstract and in a sense, do not hold up under close scrutiny. Feminists and queer theorists have made this abundantly clear in relation to gender—there is no ‘essence’ to be discovered, rather, identities are always constructed. However, even while acknowledging this point, the very *act* of using existing identity categories such as ‘women’ can reinforce the same oppressions which initially produced these identities. For example, feminisms which at once critique, yet also apparently rely on, a binary model of gender. It is necessary to ask to what ends identities

and categories are being used and a brief summary of some of the debates regarding 'identities' and 'difference' within feminism might shed light on this.

Feminists of difference, in contrast to the liberal feminist emphasis on sameness (to masculinity) take embodied female specificity and the particular experiences of women as a starting point for feminism as a way to resist patriarchy. That is, feminists of difference propose a feminine 'otherness' or alterity that they argue can be productive for the transformation of culture. In feminist theory 'difference' can refer to sexual difference between men and women as ultimate; differences between women along such lines as class, gender, sexual orientation; Derrida's concept of *différance* that holds the feminine to be the ultimate site of linguistic instability; and also to the Lacanian concept of masculine/feminine difference as a psycholinguistic structuring of the symbolic order (Felski 3). In contrast to the ideal of an androgynous future (which is read as reinforcing a phallogentric male norm) feminist sexual difference theorists argue that the current (symbolic) order is based on phallogentric domination and the elimination of the feminine except as an object of male desire (4).

From this perspective, the goal of feminism, then, is not to undermine sexual difference, which reinforces sameness defined in male terms, but to rediscover the feminine in order to create an autonomous female imaginary which is other than current stereotypes of women, and which undermines androcentrism (Felski 4). Quite utopianly, for Cornell the feminine is that which is totally other, and feminism "demands nothing less than the unleashing of the feminine imaginary--an imaginary made possible, paradoxically, by the lack of grounding of the feminine in any of the identifications we know and imagine as Woman" (qtd. in Felski 5). Similarly, Irigaray sees the potential for 'otherness' in the feminine, speaking of different "worlds" and critiquing the assumed universalism of

androcentric ways of being. She seems to see in this emphasis on the difference between the masculine and the feminine, the potential for a plurality of differences which are interdependent rather than segregated (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 77). For theorists such as Irigaray and Cornell, then, feminism involves trying to imagine alternative ways of existing as women, feminine and re-envisioning culture and how we live according to a female imaginary, the current absence of which makes utopian critique necessary.

According to Felski and other critics of this position, one problem with this view is that it seems to suggest that there is some 'reality' of difference which exists 'outside' of dominant discourses (2)—that is, Felski is dubious that a feminine otherness is possible because gender and sexual difference is always contingent on a dominant discourse. Felski argues that the wish for a femininity which is not just an oppositional "other than" but "positively other" is incongruent with poststructuralist logic which sees meaning as relational (6). That is, the sign has no essential, inherent meaning but only gets meaning through its relationship to other signs so that 'femininity' *only* makes sense in a masculine/feminine dichotomy—it cannot be something 'other' because it cannot 'mean' something on its own (6). Perhaps we could say, femininity cannot be autonomous according to this view, and cannot have a life of its own, but can only ever be part of a dichotomy (surely also a very heterosexist as well as trans-exclusive reading).

Another argument about how gender categories are used within feminism is that of whether it acts as a form of negating other forms of oppression, or whether it fosters solidarity across lines of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other groups. The turn towards diversity and difference in feminist thought and activism is sometimes interpreted as undermining the idea of a common, unified femininity or unification of women and to the disavowal of systematic inequalities among women (Felski 11). Yet saying that there is such

an entity as a common, unified category called 'women' erases differences among women, and also reproduces the gender dichotomy. Feminists of difference have been criticised for privileging sexual difference over other kinds such as race, class and culture (7). For example, it ignores the ways in which women oppress women *as* women, and makes possible claims that corporate women are symbols of women's empowerment and even 'feminist'. It also ignores the situations in which women feel more solidarity with men than with other women. For example, queer women may sometimes feel more affinity with queer men (8), or Mana Wahine solidarity with Māori men against white colonisation, rather than feel much affinity with Pākehā women. Braidotti's response to Felski's criticism is that "sexual difference is primarily a political and intellectual strategy, not a philosophy" and it should be contextualised as a response of 1970s Continental feminism to "some of the aporias and the dead ends of equality-minded, marxist-based feminism" (Braidotti 26). In other words, categories have no essential identity or meaning outside of their use.

For Braidotti, Haraway and intersectional feminists, political coalitions can be formed based on difference rather than sameness, for example what Cathy Cohen has termed a "shared marginal relationship to dominant power" (qtd. Carastathis 952), rather than a unified 'identity'. This leads Braidotti to propose that "the terms of possible feminist political coalitions are not to be sought in the categories of "sameness"-be it sister- hood, the "second sex," or some other commonality of oppression. The political focus is shifted instead toward a politics of coalition based on the confrontation of differences among women" (28). This concept of difference itself as a universal is particularly articulated in the work of feminists such as Irigaray and Spivak (Holland 3). Similarly, Haraway, in an analysis of Sojourner Truth's famous speech "Ain't I a woman?", argues that in Sojourner Truth's questioning of her exclusion from the category 'woman' as a black woman, she unsettles

‘woman’ as universal category, and simultaneously presents difference itself as the site of universality. According to Haraway, Sojourner Truth’s “body, names, and speech—their forms, contents, and articulations—may be read to hold promise for a never-settled universal, a common language that makes compelling claims on each of us collectively and personally, precisely through their radical specificity, in other words through the displacements and resistances to unmarked identity precisely as the means to claiming the status of “the human” (Haraway, “Ecce Homo” 93). Almost paradoxically, difference itself can provide the grounds for solidarity, or in Haraway’s terms, and more problematically, ‘universality’.

It is difficult to determine whether or not this interest in ‘difference’ is a reproduction of the postmodern capitalist logic of ‘difference for the sake of difference’, where ‘difference’ is what produces value (Holland 3; Grace 16). An opposition to free-floating, boundary-free, abstracted ‘difference’ in combination with a commitment to the possibility of women-centric and feminine re-inventions of language and culture perhaps explains why feminists of difference such as Irigaray remain so staunchly with dichotomies and seek to work *with* them as a site of otherness. This might sound unlikely, but holds some similarities to Deleuze and Derrida’s approaches which do not totally abandon binarized thought. Rather, “binarized categories, rather, are played off against each other, they are rendered molecular, global and analysed in their molar particularities, so that the possibilities of their reconnections, their realignment in different “systems” is established” (Grosz 132). Perhaps this *use* of dichotomies is less a belief to the ability of dichotomies to reveal or explain some ‘truth’ about the world, and may be better understood as an action which happens to involve playing with dichotomies as part of a practice of theorising.

Irigaray's apparent 'essentialism' of identities (gender, self/other) might be read along these lines. She posits identity and duality in relation to 'otherness', empathy and alterity (which I will in the next section relate to utopianism). Drawing on Patañjali's *Yoga Sutra* and the concept of *samadhi* Irigaray writes of coming to encounter the 'other', interpreting *samadhi* as a state that can be

attained by preserving the duality between another living being—an oak or rose, for example—and myself, but changing my way of perceiving. I no longer gaze at the tree or the flower as a solely visible object, but I also gaze at their invisibility: the sap which animates them and starting from which they can appear to me without any possible appropriation on my part, be it physical or mental. I think that it is the irreducible duality between the tree or the flower and myself that can lead me to a state of *samadhi*, arising from the love of life itself. (Irigaray, *Vegetal Being* 48).

This "irreducible duality" seems to demand a sort of rigidity of categories—for example, there is an 'otherness' in plants which the human observer cannot understand or instrumentalise because it is simply not human, and we cannot escape our own bodies to reach some sort of transcendent understanding. Irigaray's interest in otherness which is not reducible to a limiting construction of identity, and a 'subject/object' duality is posited as an alternative to that of the dominant culture. She argues that it resists the 'masculine' or dominating tendency to "gather everything and everyone in a whole, starting from himself and his language" (49) and instead posits a view that is plural and yet rooted. She says,

a human is a living being among other living beings, each one remaining faithful to one's roots and natural belonging without mastery over or confusion with others. It is the specificity of each embodiment and its respect by others that secures and maintains the place of every living being. (49).

Irigaray is critical of a search for blurry integration and instead insists that otherness can only be maintained and understood by upholding the integrity of boundaries. Seemingly opposing the boundary dissolving tendencies of some postmodern theorists she insists that essential 'identity' is important. This kind of 'essentialism' seems most apparently questionable when she argues that this way of encountering what is 'other' is particularly relevant for human individuals encountering other human individuals "especially a human different from myself" because here Irigaray might be accused of slipping into heterosexist and gender normative logic in her focus on (binaristic) sexual difference (*Vegetal Being*, 48). By reifying essential difference ('opposites attract') she seems to reinforce the same heterosexist logic which naturalises the binary-gender model and one which implicitly takes heterosexuality as the norm.

However, Morton responds to such criticism by reading Irigaray's concept of difference as more in alliance with irreducible otherness: all human persons and beings are different or 'other' from oneself (regardless of gender), and a concept of 'identity' (e.g. 'man', 'woman') is not needed ("Biosphere" 5). So while arguably 'femininity' *only* makes sense in a masculine/feminine dichotomy and cannot 'mean' or 'do' anything on its own (Felski 6), surely the point of feminists of difference is that this difference 'other than' is at least a *starting point*, a tiny seed of possibility that being gendered is not homogenous and this can be the launching pad for a whole other raft of differences. Perhaps this accounts for

Irigaray's emphases on both sexuate (her term) difference *and growth or potential*. From this dichotomous starting point, the inadequacy, essentialism and reductiveness of the gender binary which privileges masculinity is precisely the impetus for attempts to try to imagine beyond it. Feminists of difference such as Braidotti and Irigaray 'over reach' towards a *different kind of difference*, perhaps what Braidotti calls the "other of Other" (Braidotti 46) and what Baudrillard calls "singularity" or symbolic exchange in which "that which is 'other' is neither opposed nor comparable". This is something more than difference in the form of identity/difference (Grace 83).

Clearly, multiple readings of how feminist, anarchist and queer theorists construct the self and gender are possible, and perhaps questions about whether these are 'really' radical or rather too 'essentialist' are themselves too narrow. Morton's reading of Irigaray's essentialism may be helpful here. As Morton points out, rejecting 'essentialism' does not eliminate the forms of life associated with particular categories. Things have forms, even though they are fuzzy, and even though they are interdependent with other things. For example, there is no point at which the human body ends and the microbiome begins, and there is no particular point at which a meadow stops being a meadow through removal of blades of grass one at a time (Morton 5). There is no particular point, or "dotted line that says 'cut here'" (5). And yet, that there is no particular point, no 'essence', does not disqualify the existence of either meadows or human bodies (5). There is no 'feminine' essence, and yet, women and feminine identifying people nonetheless exist. It is a contradictory kind of existence, perhaps, but as Morton suggests, this contradictoriness, this refusal of logic, is the condition for existence itself (15).

That Irigaray, while reluctant to disavow dichotomies and 'proper' boundaries, is also critical of 'naming' identities, and of dominant and alternative forms of perceiving the other,

speaks to this kind of reading. For example, she points out that naming and assigning identity, is highly contingent on vision as a dominant sensory mode in western and androcentric cultures, and that it is *static*. For example,

we designate a birch with the same name in the spring, the summer, the autumn and the winter, although this name refers to forms, colours, and even to sounds and to odors, which are absolutely different according to the time of the year, not to say that of the day. Using the same name to allude to the birch at any time, we remove it from its living presence and deprive ourselves of our sensory perceptions to enter into presence with it. (Irigaray, *Vegetal Being* 49).

Her alternative is that we must learn to ‘look’ differently, and “not to perceive its present form in order to re-present it mentally and fix it by naming it. Rather, we must gaze at its being as living and changing” (49). This is a kind of essentialism which has it both ways: it has boundaries, yet is not confined to the kinds of essentialisms which act to reduce in ways which are both unrealistic and repressive.

Irigaray insists that in upholding and recognising boundaries, “each remains itself, and each proposes a sharing without infringing on the life of the other” (*Vegetal Being* 44). Irigaray seems to be saying, as she does elsewhere, that boundaries and identities, ‘being faithful to its roots’, are important and this ‘rootedness’ in turn seems reminiscent of her concern with immanence (being ‘in’ the world as opposed to gazing at it from afar). Further, she is arguing that boundaries and identities help us to be more receptive. Yet as others point out, identity categories also eliminate difference (Felski), and are always intertwined with power. Power in part works by the fact that “naming or defining a thing destroys it

through the creation of a perfect concept or self-identical image that reflects none of the indeterminacy of the thing itself” (Featherstone 469). The creation of categories is arguably an attempt to eliminate ambiguity and eradicate a threatening “nothingness” by creating “a self-identical image that has no external referent” (469). As according to Baudrillardian theorists, identity is tied up with the ways in which capitalism functions and permeates culture and, in a kind of self-protective aversion to the real and the interruptive, integral reality precludes ambiguity.

To be fair to Irigaray, there is nothing which suggests an intention to reinforce the kind of homogenising logic of which Baudrillard, Grace and Featherston are critical. Irigaray’s approach, therefore, may be best read as a subversive one. In other words, she takes what seems reductive (making categories and boundaries which seem to eliminate difference) and turns it back on itself in order to do the opposite—retain difference. Morton explains Irigaray’s method in terms of ‘nearness’ whereby “in a dialetheic, double-truthed loop, “the other is already within her and is autoerotically familiar to her...*so near that she cannot have it, nor have herself*” (“Biosphere” 15). To draw on another ecological analogy, Morton likens this to the proximity of human DNA and the microbiome which are at once ‘us and not us’. This is a “weird, looping nearness” which muddles active and passive, object and subject, and a “metaphysics of presence” (which denies lack, negativity, reversion, disappearance, contradiction) which is “evidently patriarchal” (15). Morton describes this as ‘putting logic into a loop’, a way of “preserving duality”—the otherness between herself and another living being, object or person.

Irigaray’s theorising contains ambitious hopes for new worlds and ways of being which she claims she can attain through her own education of herself and by learning to attend to life and living beings around her. However, she writes, “I only glimpse its

possibility from what I already know through a cultivation of my energy” and the new ways of being of which she writes “requires me to change my way of perceiving other living beings, beginning with the vegetal world. And this, little by little, will modify my manner of seeing the world, will transform me into a human who coexists with all the elements of the environment without aiming at dominating them” (Irigaray, *Vegetal Being* 49). In shifting the focus from collective action to the self, Irigaray echoes other discourses which locate the self as the locus for change or utopian improvement, mentioned earlier in this chapter. Is this another manifestation of the utopian self-improvement, the move of the utopian from the social to the self (Bauman “Utopias” 23, Hollow 20)?

Irigaray’s descriptions of her own particular solitary process for transforming consciousness, although a kind of feminist utopianism, might be placed in contrast to the society-building of the likes of Le Guin and Piercy. For Irigaray

it is through paying attention, in the present, to its concrete singularity and its sensible qualities, without substituting a name for them, that the perception of a thing, above all of a living being, can lead us from a merely physical stage to a spiritual stage of our concern. Gazing at a rose can help me to achieve a concentration that many words or discourses are not able to grant me. The combination of the sensible qualities of the flower gathers me, thanks to an attention they awaken at various levels, and, imperceptibly, I am brought from concentration to contemplation. If I take the time to live such a state, it can be converted into a sort of ecstasy, which results from a culmination of energy. (Irigaray, *Vegetal Being* 47).

Irigaray might be read in relation to popular neoliberal discourses of self-improvement which encourage individual subjects to be more vigilant and to 'pay attention' in ways which are used to reinforce a capitalist work ethic which increasingly infiltrates emotional and psychological faculties. Likewise, her emphasis on potential and growth is not dissimilar from discourses of continuous capitalist growth and self-improvement (what matters is the *potential* self—Cederström and Spicer). On the other hand, she clearly intends to critique capitalism and patriarchy. The centrality of *self* in Irigaray's analysis, and her easy merging of her philosophies with her own lived experiences of embodied subjectivity, is not out of place in feminist theory which often emphasises positionality and subjectivity. Further, despite this preoccupation with the 'self', Irigaray's critique is nonetheless with western culture and society. She situates her individual, feminine, embodied, naturalised self in opposition to culture as phallogentric, patriarchal and artificial saying that "I had to turn my culture upside down, or to reverse what my culture taught me" (42) because man-made western culture, detached from nature and constructed around abstractions such as clock-time, is "so abstract, gray, ruled by money" (40) and generally exploits and replaces nature with artificiality (33). This might be considered an intentional use of dichotomies in order to preserve otherness even as it also may risk reinforcing the individualising discourses of the dominant culture she seeks to critique.

Perhaps, drawing on Morton, Irigaray might be read as sending the capitalist logic of growth and the neoliberal exploitation of 'self' into a 'weird loop' by arguing that current western culture is not growing but stagnating, and that abstract western cultural systems separate humans from otherness and *because* of this separates ourselves from ourselves. In other words, the other is part of the self (and we are all 'others', and all have others within us which is not separable from what is 'self'). Irigaray seems to be suggesting that notions of

growth and self and their embodiment are exploited, and through their exploitation they disappear—self and the nonhuman world alike. Perhaps her work might be read as a utopianly alternative version of self-improvement utopianism, potentiality and growth.

That is all well and good, but does not appear to sufficiently address what may be a more ‘fundamental’ problem this chapter has attempted to articulate. As Grace notes, somehow the embracing of difference and otherness in the work of feminists of difference such as Braidotti and Irigaray seems to reproduce this same logic of difference under critique by Baudrillard, Grace, Deleuze and Guattari. Essentialism can be used strategically, for example as a political category, but it is not that strategic if it does not reverse that logic inherent in economic and sign value. That is, the logic of equivalence, which requires that everything (and one) has an essential identity for the purposes of determining ‘value’ (Grace 77). It is this which leads Grace to conclude that “feminist efforts to articulate the irreducible nature of alterity, or ‘otherness’, ultimately fail to materialise or have bearing on transformative political and social projects (78). In a sense, there is a kind of utopian wish for otherness or ‘true alterity’ which has not yet materialised. However, it might equally be argued that it is precisely in feminism’s *inability* to detach itself from dominant discourses, to put forward radical alternatives, wherein lies its power. That is, not rocking the boat, and instead attempting to assimilate with dominant discourses of patriarchy and capitalism might be posited to be strategic. The next chapter will examine a particular instance of this reformist version of feminist utopianism.

This chapter has attended to the ways in which these themes of identity, subjectivity and unity through difference appear in theories relating to feminism, intersectionality, queer theory, queer ecology (Morton) and the logic of postmodern capitalism (Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari, Holland). There are of course no final answers to the questions

investigated. Acknowledging this, theories and practices such as (post)anarchism, queer and feminist praxis might be understood as practices which purport to help people live with power in creative and productive ways, while also seeking to end domination. In these postmodern forms of utopianism, identities are investigated, resisted and reappropriated as theorists engage in the messy ways in which identities are always tied up with power, while retaining the hopeful conviction that oppression and domination can always be resisted. Rather like the critical utopias described in Chapter Three, total abolishment of power and absolute freedom is not sought, rather, imperfections and limits become a source of utopian work. The struggle for these theories and theorists is not in the abolishment of identity and categories, but rather in the ways in which these identities might be creatively and playfully shaped or transformed. The anarcha-feminist, postmodern anarchist, or queer anarchist, project is to continue questioning and undermining power, domination and oppression wherever they seem to occur, rather than placing hope in a stagnant and already determined future.

Chapter Five: Having It All in One Place: Feminism and Capitalism in Ellen Bravo's "Not a Favour to Women: The Workplace in a Feminist Future"

Feminist utopianism, and feminism as utopianism, can offer hope for social transformation and a demand for radical change in a climate which insists alternatives are not possible or are too risky to consider. Yet utopias, as cultural products of a particular milieu, also reflect the present, perhaps even more so than they offer conceptions of radical alternatives. The same might be said of the utopianisms of some critical discourses. In this chapter I use Ellen Bravo's short-story "Not a Favour to Women: the Workplace in a Feminist Future" (2015) in Brodsky and Nalebuff's *The Feminist Utopia Project: Fifty-Seven Visions of a Wildly Better Future* as a point of departure from which to discuss feminist entanglements with patriarchy and capitalism whose parameters carefully circumscribe discussions about social improvement and progress. I argue that in neglecting to explore a more radical alternative to the notion of the workplace and of capitalism, the text falls short of the radical and revolutionary utopian potential explored in earlier feminist utopian texts. I read this alongside mainstream liberal feminism's failing to reject dominant discourses of capitalism and neoliberalism. I argue that, while radical and utopian ideas are often portrayed as unrealistic or 'dangerous', the greater danger is not being daring enough to imagine alternatives to damaging and oppressive current social systems.

I have so far argued 'for' utopianism and the first part of this thesis has been concerned with its use for social critical cultural theorising, the ways in which fiction enacts alternatives, and how postmodern theory might be seen as political through reading it as anarchist and utopian. This chapter both supports and problematises some of these ideas. I posit a reading of Bravo's utopian short story as a demonstration of why radical approaches within feminism are needed, in particular the importance of drawing from anarchism,

environmentalism and queer theory if it is to act as a force for radical change and produce utopian visions worth committing to. However, Bravo's utopia also shows the limits and difficulties of 'doing utopianism' and of imagining radical change. I argue that it omits 'otherness' or 'alterity' by holding too fast to particular ways of thinking about utopianism in terms of end-state, rationality and agency. In Part Two I will explore whether this might be done differently.

As reflections of the present, utopias may say more about current society than any potential one. But it matters greatly which elements of the present are taken for granted, and which are viewed as appropriate subjects for criticism and re-invention. In dangerous times, a society of 'risk', dreams and visions of future possibilities die or become survivalist (Bauman "Survival"; Jacobsen and Tester 319), narrowly circumscribing and predetermining future action and possibilities. Feminism, arguably a utopian discourse which seeks transformation of culture and society (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 37; Wagner-Lawlor 2), must struggle within this anti-utopian environment of fear and survivalism. When the rise of the extreme right, cuts to gender studies, racism, and everyday violence against women all necessitate urgent feminist response, more feminist time and energy is redirected to counter immediate threat than dream of fabulous alternatives. Stifled by a discourse of 'dangerous times' that seems so hostile to brave new utopian visions, radical imagination is resultingly seen as a pointless luxury rather than a political necessity (Wagner-Lawlor 3).

This anti-utopianism is simultaneously occurring with what Prügl refers to as the 'neoliberalising of feminism' (Prügl 614) and its watering down through corporate and celebrity feminism (Keller and Ringrose 132). The 'girl power' feminism of the likes of Taylor Swift and Katy Perry, now seemingly a requirement for female celebrities, along with declarations of right-wing women such as Sarah Palin and Ivanka Trump who call

themselves feminist (Grundy n.p) arguably dilute feminism's radical potential. Increasingly it seems that feminism is appropriated and portrayed as "mere "social change" presenting "sexism as an evil which can be eradicated by female participation in the way things are" (Kornegger 32). Bravo's utopia is suggestive of this complicity of mainstream feminism with the way things are, difficult entanglements of feminism with capitalism.

This may even be a deliberately utilised strategy. Ellen Bravo, in her non-fiction work, writes quite explicitly about seeking to distance feminism from 'extreme' positions of bra-burning, man-hating and lesbianism, instead aligning feminism with (nuclear) family values, business, nation-states and working men's struggles (Bravo, "Taking" 3). Feminism is thus made accommodating, approachable, accessible and empathetic to men and men-sympathising mainstream audiences (3). This departure from 'extreme' positions such as lesbianism and the rejection of hetero-femininity might be read as a move to appease a mainstream audience and persuade us that feminism is not designed to be threatening. This gentle approach is one way of 'doing feminism', yet it arguably does less for those who would benefit from more radical social and cultural change.

Bravo's short-story utopia, "Not a Favour to Women" bears the traces of her non-fiction writing and work, and contemporary concerns with the gendering of work occupations, women in positions of power, and (still) whether women can 'have it all'. In her professional and activist life, Bravo has worked to improve conditions for women in the workplace, basing her arguments around 'family values' and business ("Taking" 3). Without denying that such work may contribute to practically improving the lives of women here and now, I seek to, more broadly, question feminist collaboration with business, the workplace, conservative family values and heterosexism. My critique is with the text's easy blending of feminism with ideologies of traditional utopianism, neoliberal capitalist and patriarchal

discourses, dangerous entanglements which are not unique to Bravo's work. To be clear, this is not to criticise the making of feminist utopias: quite the opposite. What I take issue with is that this utopia, like mainstream feminism, is not brave enough for the emancipatory and utopian ends I think Bravo may be seeking.

In summary, the story follows Anna, a custodian for 'Lux Cleaners' at 'Klondike Pharmaceuticals' living in the year 2013 who, while ill, falls asleep and inadvertently time-travels or dreams to the year 2063. This common utopian device allows Bravo to contrast a dystopian present (2013) with a utopian future (2063). Conveying the utopia through the eyes of a visitor, a traditional utopian plot device (Moylan, *Demand* 72), the everyday details of life and social organization are depicted through dialogue between Anna and her two hosts, Marion and Silvia. Framed by what might be read as a preceding dystopic fictionalisation of present times, Bravo presents her alternative future society as an improvement and part of a linear trajectory of 'progress', and in this way critiques current society through its depiction as dystopic by contrast.

In the world of 2013 Anna is forced by a capitalist system to work as a custodian for Klondike Pharmaceuticals, a company described as sexist and exploitative: Anna has been sexually assaulted at work (Bravo "Not a Favour" 171) and there are almost no scientists who are women (173). We learn that in this dystopic scenario 'custodial workers were always hired by a subcontractor, shifts were always changing, piss poor pay, no benefits, having to work sick' (171), conditions which are obviously intended to reflect present realities. As Anna struggles through daily life we learn that rent must be paid to the landowners (168), health care workers are so under-valued that some cannot afford transport and electricity (175), and people who cannot afford healthcare are left to die or suffer with illness uncared for by their society (170). Trapped in cycles which harness them

to working for the profit of an elite few, most people are left with no time for other interests or education (171). Extremely low pay necessitates Anna to work long hours without leave, forcing her to wean and part with her four week old baby, who she is not permitted to bring with her while she works outside the home (174). This utopian technique of estrangement, fictionalising the realities of the present, draws attention to the conditions of current western societies (Moylan, *Demand* 33). Through this depiction Bravo calls attention to a number of injustices and contradictions of capitalism, neoliberalism and patriarchy which she later sets out to resolve.

In keeping with Bravo's commitment to 'family values', the place of parenting and reproduction looms large in her story. In the contrasting utopia of 2063, the most significant change has been 'protections to value families' (Bravo "Not a Favour" 173), the implication of which is that work and capitalism threatens (nuclear) families. This reveals an interesting contradiction because capitalism has, historically, been dependent on the nuclear family structure and the separation of the domestic and the public sphere which permits the unpaid labour of women necessary for reproducing life (Schultheiss 28). In the 'dystopia' of 2013, with rules about what bodily activities are appropriate or not permitted at work outside the home (for example breastfeeding), a sharp distinction is made between Anna's work cleaning up after others, which is profitable for her employer, and her work as a caregiver for her baby, which is essential for the reproduction of the labour force on which capitalism depends. Feminist critical utopias have re-imagined forms of living together which do not rely on a private/public divide, and on a distinction between work done in the 'domestic' sphere, such as in *The Dispossessed* (Le Guin) and *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Piercy) mainly through the replacement of capitalism with forms of organising which do not rely on the binary opposition of the domestic and the public.

In Bravo's utopia of 2063, these distinctions at first glance seem to have evaporated. However a closer inspection finds that they are retained and what at first appears as an elimination of boundaries is rather an *incorporation* of family life *into* the workplace. This extinguishes tension between family life and work life which could be used to leverage a more fundamental critique of capitalism. Instead, the boundaries have softened so that the 'private' can be assimilated into the work sphere. This is signified by 'the bulletin board, jam-packed with pictures of babies and toddlers—but also workers with parents and partners and siblings' (Bravo, "Not a Favour" 173), the day-care centre and the 'lactation suite' on site (174). While maternity has here been subsumed by the work sphere, its physical separation from the rest of the workplace still indicates an implicit acceptance that parenting and work are different tasks, that there is a distinction between maternal (or paternal) embodiment and bodily uses which are profitable.

Notably, these resemble the changes made to the workplace in Jane Fonda's (1980) comedy satire *9 to 5*, clearly a source of inspiration for Bravo's short story utopia (likewise, the association for which Bravo was director, also named 9to5, is said to have inspired Fonda's film (Genasci n.p)). In the film, escalating events lead three secretaries to kidnap their sexist and egotistical boss and run the workplace themselves. However unlike the film, in Bravo's utopia the ironic, satirical and parodic aspects have been lost, frustrating any sense of revelry, rebellion or further possible change. Instead, I suggest that Bravo's 2063 future resembles what Spicer and Fleming refer to as "the personalization of employment" whereby modern managerialism seeks a softening of boundaries between the public and private, encouraging employees to 'express themselves' at work, melting the boundary between work and self in order to increase engagement of workers (Spicer and Fleming 123).

Unlike feminist utopias which have engaged with such problems by imagining less privatised, non-hierarchical and more communal alternatives to the nuclear family structure (*The Dispossessed*, *Woman on the Edge of Time*, *The Female Man* in Moylan, *Demand*) Bravo naturalises the nuclear family. Policy “protections to value families” constitute the biggest change to the workplace, such as the introduction of paid leave in an attempt to resolve capitalism’s contradictory treatment of reproductive labour (Bravo, “Not a Favour 173). The entwinements of ‘family values’ with the naturalisation of hierarchy, racial supremacy, heterosexism, eugenics and the control of women’s reproduction (Collins 77) are left uncritiqued, where even the only lesbian character in the story conforms to a marital and nuclear family structure. Such emphasis on reproduction, and the absence in the story of anyone without children, reinforces what Lee Edelman calls ‘reproductive futurism’, a logic of progress where ‘the social *good* appears co-terminus with human *futurity*’ (Sheldon n.p) and the image of the child justifies a discourse of future growth for capitalist exploitation and profit accumulation which relies on ‘surplus populations’ (Sheldon). In a time in which Donna Haraway writes, ‘make kin, not babies’ (“Making Kin” 102), this does not appear as a radical alternative to present social and environmental dilemmas. In contrast, Haraway argues that “it is high time that feminists exercise leadership in imagination, theory, and action to unravel the ties of both genealogy and kin, and kin and species” to the ends of not increasing the human population, but the well-being of all people and life forms (102). A controversial statement, for sure, but equally problematic is a continued commitment to status-quo, patriarchal and capitalist linkages of futurity and reproduction.

Harnessed to the state, Bravo’s new form of near-compulsory parenthood treads a fine line between a parental paradise and just another way of bringing reproduction within the control of the state. This trusting depiction of state power departs from feminist critical

utopias which critique government and representative (non-direct) democracy and depict cooperation and proximal forms of relating as a better alternative to nation-states, hierarchy and power which inevitably leads to inequality (Leeder 2). Many critical feminist utopias imagine the enactment of a feminism which means, not women in positions of corporate power and women as heads of state, but the abolishment of unequal distribution of power altogether (Kornegger 12).

Departing from this view, Bravo's utopia seems to imply that with women in positions of power, equality will naturally arise. Anna's guides explain that "part-time equity" in terms of "advancement" and pay ("Not a Favour" 174) has come about because "the three management team leaders—what you all called a CEO?—include two women. One was hired when she was pregnant" (174). Elsewhere Bravo argues that both women and men are oppressed by certain elite men but also that "some [elites] may wear high heels and lipstick, but regardless of gender, they're part of this group" (Bravo, "Taking" 4). However in her workplace utopia she does not push this to its logical conclusion which would hold all forms of hierarchy to be problematic. Far from the anti-hierarchical utopias of the 1970s and 1980s, the allusion to "leadership circles" in Bravo's utopia implies that, however 'reformed', hierarchical patterns of organising are taken as a 'natural' given. Although workers in 2063 appear to have increased control they are still subject to corporate boards (Bravo, "Not a Favour" 173) and "top pay" is up to "twenty times the average worker's wage" (173). As some empirical studies of worker cooperatives in firms in market economies has found, 'worker control is perfectly compatible with capitalist structures' (Buck 62) and Bravo's utopia might be read to illustrate this.

Similarly, liberal mainstream feminism assumes that gender equality can be achieved within the limits of capitalism (Prügl 614) and generally refrains from explicitly critiquing

capitalism, the state and all forms of authority (Jeppesen and Nazar 163). Instead, inclusion of women into positions of power is presented as making hierarchy and inequality more 'ethical', justifying or concealing exploitation. There is slippage from celebrating 'diversity' and 'equality' to celebrating hierarchy and inequality and, in our present, allowing its intensification. Despite so many instances of non-hierarchical feminist organising (Kinna 17), complicity with hierarchy and authority has also been a persistent feature of western feminism, as many intersectional feminists, Mana Wahine, black feminists, socialist and anarchist feminists point out. Hierarchies within feminism, particularly race and class hierarchies, have enabled a certain complicity of feminism with the very structures many feminists wish to critique. That the placement of women, or more 'diverse' women, in powerful or authoritarian positions fails to end oppression (Ehrlich 6; Kornegger 32; Leeder 2) is painfully obvious when we look at the ways individual, educated, white women may be enjoying more privileges and power but in the meantime has the lot of women of colour and women living under colonisation dramatically improved? As Prügl puts it, "liberal feminism and individualist solutions to gender oppression are thriving as feminism is walking the halls of corporate and state power. But rather than challenging capitalism, it appears to have gone to bed with capitalism, mixing at the meetings of the World Economic Forum in Davos as much as in the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)" (614) where 'gender balance and equality' is spoken of as "an asset for business and economic development" (614), as Bravo also insinuates ("Taking" 3-4). It sometimes seems that (mainstream) feminism is fighting for 'the "right" to plug into a hierarchical economy' (Kornegger 31) rather than fighting against power, exploitation and hierarchy.

With the neoliberal turn, women's 'empowerment' comes to be conflated with successful integration into certain arenas of (androcentric) social life, such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine) disciplines, business and governance—jobs with more prestige, hierarchically ordered above work related to caring, teaching, crafts or creative endeavours. In her utopia, Bravo insinuates that in the absence of sexism, women will make the 'rational' choice to strive to become scientists and leaders. People can begin as cleaners and then 'progress' to scientist status, and this is implied as the desirable direction (Bravo, "Not a Favour" 173). Reflecting current preoccupations with 'encouraging' more women into 'STEM' (or 'SET') disciplines and the persistent undervaluing of traditional women's work deserves more critical readings given that much activism, campaigning and liberal-feminist politics persistently hold women or false 'perceptions' of gender to be the problem, rather than problematising the androcentricism of western science and the undervaluing of women's and non-western forms of knowledge. Posited solutions generally involve "changing women's dispositions and perceptions in order that they might choose, and fit better into, SET" (Phipps 768), or changing cultural beliefs about women's abilities to fit into SET or STEM, rather than challenging the 'cultural masculinities' which underlie mainstream science as a great deal of work in feminist science studies has shown (771).

This liberal feminist seeking of women's inclusion into androcentric paradigms, rather than challenging and interrogating such structures and their entanglements with patriarchy, is in keeping with a charge that liberal feminism seems to help justify the intensification of neoliberal ideologies (Prügl 614). Anna is informed by her utopian guides that "you want to advance, you got to work hard and have talent" (Bravo, "Not a Favour" 175). The implication here is that individual women can bring about their own emancipation

through individually seeking inclusion into the spheres privileged men have constructed, to “lean in”—to take advantage of the shattered glass ceiling’ (Silverman and Hagelin 879).

Such an individualised and aspirational imperative is characteristic of ‘the goals of mainstream feminism (often summed up as “having it all”)’ which ‘serve a narrative of heteronormative careerism and neoliberal self-making’ (Silverman and Hagelin 880).

In this paradise of career advancement there is no ‘outside’ to the work place. Like in many twentieth-century dystopias, the happy, productive worker sees no ‘outside’ to work, the utopian state and is therefore incapable of dissent. Herein lies the danger of traditional utopianism. As critical feminist utopian writers have proposed, it is lack of dissent and potential change that makes a utopia totalitarian (Moylan, *Demand* 36). It is only paradise if you can also *leave* (Wagner-Lawlor 189) and writers of feminist critical utopianism have been careful to depict this possibility (Moylan, *Demand* 100). In Bravo’s utopia on the other hand with no ‘outside’ ever mentioned, and with the workplace capable of meeting every need, work becomes world through subsuming all aspects of life. With adult education, libraries, socialising opportunities, free ‘healthy’ meals (Bravo, “Not a Favour” 170), paid parental leave and on-site childcare, Bravo’s utopia is reminiscent of the ‘progressive’ contemporary workplace. It is almost indistinguishable from, for example, Google’s workplace which provides employees with “free healthy and gourmet meals, laundry and fitness facilities, generous paid parental leave, and on-site childcare” and “flexibility to work on passion projects and tap into their creativity” with the aim of building “a more creative, satisfied, and intimate community of employees” (Gillett n.p). It all sounds fantastic: like the digitalisation of our lives, everything in one place, a cosy capitalism. Yet, with everything in one place, much like the digitalisation of everyday life, there is no escape. Spicer and

Fleming cite a revealing study of a large US bank which began providing services such as childcare, car service and meals in an effort to transform the workplace into “a home away from home”, dissolving previous barriers which separated work from home, leisure and life (Spicer and Fleming 123). Posited in liberating terms, these developments enabled employees to “access the work-flow process whenever they liked, include personal events and interests in the office schedule, and cultivate a workplace climate that was almost indistinguishable from living as such” (123). With no boundaries separating personal concerns from their job, employees were “completely overtaken by work” and no longer had a life outside of their workplace (123). Rather than cutting-edge, work-home blurring seems a little all too familiar: ‘a woman’s work is never done’.

By merging reproduction, leisure, sociality and work for profit, Bravo attempts to resolve the internal conflicts of patriarchal capitalism, “the historical contradictions of the time” (Moylan, *Demand* 38). But perhaps this is not the work feminism should be doing. In Bravo’s utopia it is dangerous that dissent is past. Unlike Le Guin and Piercy who suggest that the contestation of power must be *ongoing*, in Bravo’s utopia revolution is done and dusted, existing only in the history which enabled this ‘feminist’ future. The idea of social transformation is made safe by its retention within the limits of a naturalised capitalism, a revolutionary impulse tamed through the depiction of having already happened so that it can now sink into irrelevance. The people’s reclaiming of power and planet-saving (Bravo, “Not a Favour” 175) seem to mainly serve as a means to ‘clean up’ capitalism rather than create something different. Perhaps most dangerously, the fact that many dominant social structures such as capitalism, reproductive futurity and unequal power hierarchies remain reinforces a discourse that such systems are natural, inevitable or ‘the people’s choice’.

When Anna returns to 2013 she will not be able to remember what she has seen of the future so that she “won’t interfere with history” (Bravo, “Not a Favour” 176), ‘interfere’ implying a ‘right’ way for the future to unfold. However it also suggests a certain malleability of the future. It is possible to read a certain open-endedness as Anna is told

“But there is something you’ll take back with you,” Marion said. “You’ll dare to dream the world you know you deserve and you won’t settle for anything less. You’ll know that change is possible. And you’ll know that it’s people just like you who will make it happen.” (176).

When she returns what world will Anna dream of? Will it be different from the utopia depicted, thus implying that the future is open-ended? There is a utopian impulse (Bloch 40) in this, yet its potential for inciting action has already been undermined through a pre-determined view of the future panning out happily. It becomes a comforting narrative about the natural outcome of progress, rather than a call to action. Comforting, not just because it is a particularly cosy vision of the future, but comfortable in the sense that it is rather too familiar. If Bravo means to suggest that the world she depicts is the one Anna will imagine and bring about when she wakes, then seemingly Bravo implies that aspiring to a reformed version of capitalism is the best that can be hoped for. Indeed, even that people like Anna “will make it happen” is more a sinister statement of fact than a call to action because of course it is the people doing the work, the working class and women, who carry out the action of history necessary for capitalism and patriarchy to exist, who make things happen.

Depictions of incremental change may help make the idea of utopianism and feminism palatable in the present. Yet it is important to consider *how* certain ideas of the future come to be considered incremental, realistic or radical and to *whom*. That is, if Bravo's utopia seems believable or pragmatic from certain perspectives, it may have more to do with its likeness to what dominant discourses and power structures make believable and possible and insist to be the inevitable and natural outcome. It is not necessarily more pragmatic to collaborate with and seek to appease the powerful because perhaps 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' (Lorde 380). The rejection of dominant ideologies and the imagining of something else is a practical task for the survival of feminism for which co-optation poses a 'treacherous' threat (Kornegger 32). This story contains warning, but perhaps also, eventually, as for Anna, awakening.

Concluding Part One

In Part One I have explored socialist, anarchist, feminist and environmentalist utopianisms in fiction, theory and oppositional movements. I have argued that, while not unified, these different theories and political movements can be read as utopian. That is, the troublesome questions raised, worked through, left unresolved, or explored in fiction and theory constitute a culture's self-reflexive contemplation about what kind of society and culture we live in, of which dreams for progress, improvement, transcendence or alterity are a part. In other words, what is 'not-yet', but wished for, is a part of what 'is'. This is less about finding 'answers' and more about "how to ask the question" to paraphrase Shevek in *The Dispossessed* (Le Guin 187), because, as I have been arguing, the kinds of questions a culture asks itself says a great deal about the worlds one is trying to bring about.

Questions about the nature of reality always already colour how that ‘reality’ will be interpreted because they also always contain certain ideals. These ‘ideals’ are as much a part of reality as anything else.

Part of this exploration of postmodern utopianism has involved reflecting on thought and discourse itself, just as ideas about the ideal organisation of space, or child rearing or democracy or hopes for science, have been subjects of utopian experimentation. However, I suggest that some of the ‘utopian thinking’ explored in this chapter may be limited in that it prioritises particular ideas of human agency, identity and individual autonomy which remain attached to dominant discourses. Yet in the same way that end-state utopianism paradoxically critiques politics to end politics, utopia as process can mean, whether implicitly or explicitly, creating utopian visions in order to critique other ideologies and ensure that politics *continues*. The fact that utopianism has been co-opted for capitalist or totalitarian regimes, for example, need not prevent its use by those who resist such control, in the form of creativity, direct action, cultural resistance or theorising. For example, Burwell claims that feminism’s rejection of utopia has cost the movement its ‘principle of hope’ and the ability to think of some positive alternative, or even to critique existing culture and organization of society (Burwell 23). Benhabib laments the decline in utopian thinking in feminist theory and argues that “we as women, have much to lose by giving up the utopian hope in the wholly other” (qtd. in Johnson 21). While feminism and feminist utopianism might provide one such place in which to welcome or explore the “wholly other”, it is not just women who have much to lose by abandoning a project of radical alterity, but any group of people and beings oppressed by western heteropatriarchal capitalism. The next section of this thesis will problematise parts of what I have argued here, but without giving up the hope in the “wholly other”.

In neoliberal postmodern capitalism or integral reality in which everything is positivised, present or known, all that remains to be done is to choose according to one's desires. This too, according to neoliberal logic, should be known. To this Fisher retorts that "people do not know what they want" in part because "the most powerful forms of desire are precisely cravings for the strange, the unexpected, the weird" which can only be offered by artists, or media, willing to take certain risks in giving people something other than a known source of satisfaction (Fisher 75-76). That people cannot know what they want troubles notions of agency, desire, utopianism and market logic, but it also troubles critical theory and leaves open a back door for more explicitly authoritarian forms of power or instruction. And yet, if detached from elitist and hierarchical frameworks, might the idea also be quite subversive? Perhaps *no one* 'knows' what they want, and desire is not something to be 'known' but rather an action which plays out by allowing in "the weird", "the strange", "the unexpected". In other words, desire is an action involving entering into diverse sets of relations with other people, ideas, things and that this is a process, not a static state, seems to resonate with some of the critical utopian ideas discussed in this chapter. Arguably, it is this *not knowing* and the necessary accompanying indecision and experimentation that drives utopian alterity.

In Part One I have examined utopian fiction, utopian theory, critical theory as utopian, the 'utopian' content of anarchism, feminism and environmentalism and the ways these ideas have been explored in some fictional works. They have been utopianisms which rely on the idea of imagining radical ideas with an aspect of *intentionality*. In this sense, they are humanist and human-centric, visionary, and mind-centric. While critical and open-ended, these forms of utopianism imply at least a degree of theorising, planning, and even prescription. As noted, notions of self, identity and autonomy feature in these discourses

which relate to reifications of rational planning and choice. These are all “positive” in the sense of holding to ideas of improvement, but also in the sense of describing things which already exist in dominant cultural discourses. In this next part I try to turn to forms of utopianism which are less ‘positivised’. I contemplate other ways of exploring or ‘doing’ utopianism by emphasising alterity, accident, creativity and the ‘non’ or ‘not-yet’. I stretch the concept of utopianism further by considering alterity, accident and nonhuman agency, in contrast to utopianism as hinging on ideals and human will. If we cannot ‘know’ what utopias we desire, then perhaps it is in the strange, the critical, the queer, the non or more-than-human where utopian alterity resides.

Part Two: Accidental Utopianisms?

“For strangeness breeds richness” (Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* 97).

For Wagner-Lawlor, there is a “strangeness within” (19), both in the material world and our own contradictions as human beings (187). All around us there exist utopian “portals of possibility” (20) and these might be acknowledged through remaining sensitive to what is already immanent in the material world. That is, just as a utopia need not be a perfect end-state but a critical and open-ended work, utopianism may not be confined to the clear delineation of social and cultural alternatives. As Bloch claims, utopianism is an impulse inherent in nearly all kinds of activities, and it is not clear that these must be ‘intentional’, nor that these should preclude the nonhuman and material realities with which humans are entangled.

Turning away from the humanistic themes of the utopian traditions in Part One, in Part Two conceptualisations of intentionality and agency are contested but, rather than doing away with these completely, I look to theories which advocate for a more expansive version of agency and in doing so subtly change what we use agency to mean. This might be useful for the survival and expansion of utopianism and a response to the “postmodern suspicion, even hostility toward the imagination as a form of false consciousness and “outdated humanist illusion”” (Wagner-Lawlor 4). I explore how utopianism may be more or other than ‘willed transformation’, and other such “outdated humanist illusions” by exploring utopianism as action rather than plan, and how it may evolve ‘accidentally’ or without the need for a concept of intention or motivation. By looking at utopianism as ‘implicit’ in theory and writing, and as it applies to embodiment and materiality, including

via ecological metaphors, I argue for conceptualising utopianism in terms of *alterity* and otherness rather than in humanistic terms of agency.

To direct interest towards alterity entails approaching that which may be ‘non’ or ‘more than representable’ in current dominant discourses. My argument is that it may be fruitful to approach these areas which seem vague, negative, or complex to find new kinds of alterities and utopianisms, new ways of thinking and being in the world which just might facilitate living in more liberated, empathetic and non-exploitative ways. These are things which are, perhaps paradoxically, ‘non’ and yet also already there, a seeming contradiction of materialist critical theories which I will seek to explore in the coming chapters. My reading of some of these authors, theorists and (con)texts might seem somewhat elusive and vague, but this is in part because they deal with notions which are difficult to conceptualise in existing language and dominant discourses. Namely, those things which seem particularly difficult to conceptualise such as embodiment, emotion and the nonhuman: in other words, the material, and/or perhaps the transcendent. While it may seem contradictory to posit this kind of utopianism in terms of ‘transcendence’, my contention is that it is necessary to consider the desire for transcendence because as Adorno argues “nothing could be experienced as truly alive if something that transcends life were not promised also...The transcendent is, and it is not” (qtd. in Bennett, “Steps” 354). As Adorno suggests the ‘non’ is both material and spiritual, “a dark or vague promise of an absolute-to-come” (364). The desire for the ‘not-yet’ is transcendent and idealistic, and therefore ‘never (yet) here’, although it is simultaneously always already immanent such as that hope and yearning are strongly felt, embodied realities of existence which have ‘real’ effects in the world. Part of trying to ‘transcend’ what is, and orientate towards the not-yet

can involve a material dimension for example, “hope is placed, rather, in the prospect of becoming *more awake* to the vitality of matter” (364).

To this end, Part Two is an attempt to explore some of these ‘unknowables’ or nons, ‘more thans’ and alterities, the “strangeness within”. Beginning by examining what it is to try to ‘know’ or create knowledge through theorising and writing, I then move to examine how art or literature can carry us through these ‘nons’ or ‘other’ ways of knowing and being in the world. In the coming chapters I attempt to discuss two quite different things together and how they relate to reality, politics and utopianism: the process of theorising, and philosophies about nonhuman nature and materialities. In part, my intention is to show the utopianisms in these kinds of texts which evade the earlier humanist and agentic version of utopianism discussed in Part One. All of these relate, in some way, to the material environment and embodiment, and in Chapter Eight I explore theories about nonhuman nature and nonhuman agency through a critical utopian lens. This involves thinking together organicism and utopianism by reading theorists such as Morton, Latour, Bennett, McAlpine and Plant Gang in relation to utopianism, the non-representable, the other, creative process, alterity and writing. Lastly, I interrogate a ‘paradox’ similar to the one between transcendence and immanence, that of (feminist) utopianism as both proximal and estranging (Chapter Nine). The reasons for this are philosophical, but also ethical. As Wagner-Lawlor argues, and as many feminist utopias and fictions show, nonhuman nature “the constructedness of Nature, framed by scientific narratives and exploitative economic practices, is an aspect of human experience we must continue to deconstruct” (Wagner-Lawlor 194).

Utopianism beyond the human means, at another level, engaging with ‘the other’, writing, and the non- or more-than-representable, often for the purposes of engendering

more sympathetic relationships. Before going on, I will briefly outline a range of eco-centric perspectives, particularly those which might be construed as ‘alternative’ to dominant discursive constructions of nonhuman nature. My intention in subsequent chapters is to take the ‘logic’ of theory and fiction which deals with the nonhuman, and apply it to thinking about utopianism, theory, imagination and empathy more broadly. I am interested in *both* the ‘logic’ or approach and what it can offer for thinking through the ‘non-conceptual’ or the ‘more-than-representable’, but also the material subject of such theories—the nonhuman environment itself. Given the ways in which visions of the future increasingly demand an engagement with ‘the environment’, discourses about nonhuman nature can be considered as one of the ways in which current theories ‘do’ utopianism.

Theorists in ecopolitical theory, Critical Animal Studies (CAS) and environmentalism argue that it is necessary for humans (especially in the west) to change how we *think* about the nonhuman world. This is a utopian practice in which the realm of action is thought or discourse, even as the subject is the material world and forms of relating which are always embodied. Generally, discourses about the environment and human relationships with the nonhuman world rely on a culture/nature binary, with ‘culture’ dominating ‘nature’. In the western world, historically, and today, the dominant understanding of ‘nature’ is that it is risky, problematic, inferior, fragile and an object to be managed, controlled and conquered (Clark 63). Nonhuman nature is constructed as consisting of inert objects which can be objectively ‘known’ by experts, and restrained by the laws of nature (Haraway, *Modest Witness* 25). Yet as cultural theorist Raymond Williams famously puts it, ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ are the most complex words in the English language and refer to multiple, often conflicting meanings, associations and concepts (Giblett 925). Many scholars argue that these concepts are difficult, or impossible, to separate. For example Latour argues that “the

ozone hole is too social and too narrated to be truly natural; the strategy of industrial forms and heads of state is too full of chemical reactions to be reduced to power and interest, the discourse of the ecosphere is too real and too social to boil down to meaning effects. Is it our fault if the networks are simultaneously real like nature narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society?" (*We Have Never Been Modern* 7-8). Distinctions between what is 'natural' and what is 'cultural' become increasingly flimsy, and in fact reveal that such distinctions have always been fabricated.

Latour's approach is to reconceptualise the human and nonhuman as inseparable, under what he terms the "collective". In the collective there are no 'subjects' or 'objects', rather all humans and nonhumans are 'actants', defined by their ability to facilitate or obstruct mastery or domination of other actants. In this way, actions in the collective are never complete, but endless and unpredictable. It is because of this unpredictability and shared space, Latour argues, that humans should include and pay attention to the nonhuman (*Politics* 80). Drawing on Latour, Jane Bennett also makes a case for the vibrancy of matter, again emphasising a kind of nonhuman agency, or 'thing power'. Rather than imagining forms of existence through a life/matter binary, "all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations" ("Enchanted" 13). This is somewhat similar to Deleuze's 'assemblage', which is concerned with connections between bodies and challenging usual conceptions of body-boundaries. This means reconstructing human and nonhuman bodies as "not a coherent organism corresponding to a stable sense of self: nor is it necessarily organic" but rather, "created through temporary assemblages that may involve connections between the organic and inorganic" (Potts 19). In this way, bodies exist in "a kind of chaotic network of habitual and non-habitual connections, always in flux, always reassembling in different ways" and are never in a stable state of 'being', but rather

constantly becoming (19). These approaches to thinking about materiality consider the interrelationality of all life forms and matter, as opposed to the categorical separation of humans from nonhuman nature.

Queer ecological theory also puts forward ways of understanding nonhuman nature which are similarly rhizomatic and contrast to the implicit prioritisation of lineage in mainstream environmentalism. For example, Seymour unpacks the implicit heterosexism which underlies mainstream environmentalism and many philosophies of nature (vii; Morton). As Seymour points out, the image of “the child” is often used in environmental campaigning, and environmental degradation is usually framed as a threat to a particular (heterosexual) way of life which revolves around the nuclear family (vii). Thus mainstream environmentalist logic often speaks to those “for whom the connection between reproductive futurity and environmental protection is a no-brainer, the replication of the white middle class is natural, and thus its being threatened is bad, and likewise, air and water are natural and thus the pollution thereof is bad” (viii). Such environmentalist discourses are apparently dependent on a white-centric, heterosexist and even homophobic conception of nature.

Seymour questions whether all future thinking must be necessarily heteronormative, capitalist and oppressive, and suggests that a queer ecology might be able to distinguish and affirm a different kind of futurity which does not rely on reproductivist and productivist ideologies, and might instead be environmental, indigenous and liberating (9). Queer utopianism (such as Muñoz) could inspire environmentalist agendas that “seek to achieve positive ends without resorting to heterosexist, homophobic or pro-reproductive ideologies” (10). In turn, utopianism helps queer ecology envisage beyond the stagnancy

and areas of stuckness in queer theory and ecology to envision ways of thinking and caring about the natural world and the future, which are not heteronormative (Seymour 10).

Morton argues that heterosexist gender performance produces an inside/outside dichotomy that makes it possible to think of nature as a closed system, whereas a queer ecological perspective would recognise that the natural world, like queerness and like the permeable human body, defies boundaries ("Queer Ecology" 274). Like Kropotkin, Morton argues that evolution is basically a narrative about cooperation, rather than competition (276). Morton proposes to replace the more common 'web of life' or arborescent view of ecology with Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic model as most appropriate. The non-hierarchical rhizomatic version of ecology counters the unified, centralised organic metaphors which, Morton argues, have been adapted for authoritarian masculinism (276). That is, organicism, Morton argues, is not ecological because it assumes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and this is hostile to difference (278). The assumption that nature is one big happy whole, with every part of the ecosystem working for some greater cause is an anthropomorphic and authoritarian idea which ignores complexity. Instead, queer ecology, in some ways like anarchism, might emphasise immediate connections and intimacy as this necessitates "thinking and practising weakness rather than mastery, fragmentariness rather than holism, and deconstructive tentativeness rather than aggressive assertion, multiplying differences, growing up through the concrete of reification" (278). Beings exist "precisely because they are nothing but relationality" (277) and are constituted by the connections between, rather than an abstract overarching 'whole'. The difference between the arborescent view of nature and the rhizomatic model is analogous to the differences between traditional and critical utopianism (as I will argue in Chapter Eight).

Morton conceptualises the “strange stranger” as a way of thinking about nonhuman life, with the idea being to acknowledge that other life-forms are strangers and their strangeness is irreducible and unpredictable: “how things exist is both utterly unmysterious and unspeakably miraculous” (277). Strange strangers are both strange and familiar, in part because we are genetically related to all lifeforms and we are all capable of participating in a collective—thus queer ecology challenges individualism with collectivity meaning “consciously choosing co-existence” which is, rather utopianly, “always to come” (277). Morton argues that if environmentalisms do not focus on and value intimacy and instead reinforce “phobias” of intimacy and relationality, then there can be no hope of effectively addressing current environmental issues such as global warming (278). These intimacies are “not heteronormative, not genital, not geared to ideologies about where the body stops and starts” valuing intimacy with the strange, engaging desire and acknowledging embodiment rather than invisible masculinity (279).

This is all to say that the nonhuman, the ‘other’, the strange, the us and not us, can come to be thought of differently, and in particular, ways which strive towards more ethical and empathetic ways of relating. This relates to utopianism because “empathy is, by definition a largely imaginative act” (Seymour 12). To empathise with someone or something means to use our imagination to understand what something is like for them. Citing Eckersley, Garforth argues that “at the heart of ecologism’s utopianism is its distinctive model of relational ethics. Rather than adopting an abstract or “axiological” approach to ethical value, ecocentric philosophy is predicated on a lived or intuitive ethics (idem, 61), inviting us to cultivate a more expansive sense of self through identification with and empathy for other human and nonhuman beings” (“Ideal Nature” 11). Encountering

‘the other’ requires both empathy and imagination, a point extended on shortly in the following chapter.

Queer ecological thought is not the only place where contestation of how western cultures relate to the nonhuman environment is taking place, nor is it the only discourse advocating for more empathetic and immediate forms of relating. Green anarchy, and anarcho-primitivism envision more extreme material change. For anarcho-primitivists, civilisation is the source of all human and ecological problems and the only way to reject domination is to deconstruct civilisation and recreate life based on “indigenous, earth-based, non-industrial solutions...in communion with the natural world” (Zerzan “What is Liberation” 206). Living in an anarcho-primitive, or ‘future primitive’ way means living in “face-to-face communities in balance with each other and our surroundings, without formal hierarchies and institutions to mediate and control our lives” (The Green Anarchy Collective “What is Green Anarchy” 2). Further, they reject mass society and the need for representation outside of direct experience (5), all technology, excluding ‘simple tools’ which are defined as “a temporary usage of an element within our immediate surroundings and for a specific task” (4), and advocate for “rewilding” which involves learning and reclaiming skills for sustainable co-existence such as foraging for food, finding shelter and healing with materials found naturally in the bioregion (6).

Yet interestingly these principles also extend beyond basic material concerns, again problematising the thought/practice or theory/living dichotomies. Anarcho-primitivists also challenge the domination of symbolic culture itself because the use of language, numbers, art and time mediate experience and make objectification and alienation possible (Green Anarchy Collective 2). In other words, anarcho-primitivists follow through the anarchist rejection of representation to its ‘logical conclusion’ and advocate for types of direct

communication, expression and experience which is only possible face-to-face making physical proximity the priority (Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness* 5). The privileging of physical proximity protects against decisions or influence arising from those outside of the affected relationship, region or community. Such a rejection of language and other symbolism unsettles our reliance on visual and abstracted means of communicating and being in the world, and challenges claims of neutrality associated with these technologies, cultural practices, and modes of thought. Anarcho-primitivism rejects 'culture' altogether, and in doing so, does away with the need for dichotomies such as culture/nature, human/nature and anthropocentrism/biocentrism. This is a form of utopian praxis which seeks consistency and coherency throughout its practice and theory, often without separating the two.

For eco discourses which do not reject the notion of culture, it can be challenging to conclude that they sufficiently undermine the discourses they apparently seek to overturn. Hall argues that many supposedly 'eco-centric' anarchists and environmentalists (such as Bakunin and Kropotkin) hold views which are fundamentally anthropocentric (Hall 385). For example, animal rights philosopher and activist Peter Singer claims that life forms who experience pain and thought in ways similar to humans, such as animals, deserve ethical consideration, whereas plants are excluded because they are "subjectively barren" (385). This is problematic because it reinforces the same hierarchies which oppress nonhumans and justify environmental exploitation, while also ignoring the relative ecological primacy of plants on earth (385). It is difficult to explain why killing plant life is excusable without falling to anthropocentric terms such as sentience, emotions and thought. Similarly the idea of, and privileging of wilderness relies on a human/nature distinction not unlike the philosophies deep ecology claims to reject (Luke xiii).

Yet to assume that it is possible to 'transcend' our own anthropocentric perspectives and that there is a 'non-biased' truth to discover is arguably anthropocentric itself. This might be thought of as a kind of utopian problem, or rather, the same paradox that afflicts utopianism. Critique implies an alternative, and yet often critiques seem to reinforce the same kinds of social, cultural and philosophical problems such as binaristic thinking which are being held to account. If utopia is what cannot yet be said with current concepts, or cannot yet be done given political constraints (Moylan, *Demand* 39), how is it possible to ever think or act 'otherwise'? Further, if rather than the future "utopia and science fiction are most concerned with the current moment of history", though represented in an estranged way (35), how can they have anything different to say? If utopias and science-fiction demonstrate "our incapacity to imagine the future" (41), how can we ever 'rupture' or escape the present to think differently? The next chapter is an attempt to think through the process of theorising, knowledge, writing, creativity and knowing 'the other' as aspects of utopian and social/cultural critical work.

Chapter Six: The Material of Theorising

Attempts to reach the ‘reality’ of nonhuman nature, and the search for an authentically ‘other’ alterity or utopianism are both daunting tasks. A common ‘problem’ across academic theory, and by extension social critical theory, counter-cultural movements and utopianism is the difficulty of producing alternatives and imaginings of radically different possibilities—whether that be in knowledge, ways of living or political practice. In this chapter I want to suggest that trying to ‘reach’ this so-called more authentic material reality is afflicted by the same problems (or is a similarly utopian effort) as trying to imagine what is ‘authentically’ alternative. Paradoxically, the same question afflicts the effort to reach ‘the real’ and the effort to reach the ‘not yet’, the ‘really real’ perhaps always being a kind of ‘not yet’ and the ‘not yet’ of utopianism always being already here, immanent in the present (for how else could we claim to detect it?). Perhaps this position is not as contradictory as it seems. As 19th century anarchist Proudhon has said, “the ideal...has its base, its cause, its power of development, in the real’ and a genuinely realistic art would have as its ‘goal’ in fact, to evoke ‘the ideal” (qtd. Cohn 126). Remaining sensitive to the material world, lived experiences and embodied realities, without giving up the hope of alternatives to these, is a challenge for critical theorists seeking social and cultural change, and for the process of knowledge creation or discovery alike. In this chapter I consider this issue in the context of theorising and (creative) writing and the ways in which these can be read in relation to utopianism. I will try to draw together both literature which addresses ‘theorising’ or ‘theory making’ directly, and literature which considers thinking, writing and creative process.

As I argued in Chapter Two, utopianism is both creative and critical. The “utopian dimension” is not just a vague hope or romantic dream but rather includes criticism of the existing order and the delineation of new possibilities for the “here-and-now” and so is “rational-intellectual as well as imaginative-creative” (el-Ojeili 245). Theorising and writing fiction involve both creativity and critique. Differentiated from (“dead”) theory, theorising is playful, moving, and never ending, and includes “everything that precedes the final formulation that is set down on paper” and “fixed” or “frozen” as theory (Swedberg 14). In short, theorising can involve finding something interesting, making free associations until a topic is found, assigning it a name, developing new concepts, building out a theory and producing an explanation (30). In the very early stages of “*anything goes!*” (11), creativity, surprise and free associations are paramount (6, 11) which is followed by a more ‘critical’ phase of ‘building out’ the theory, which might be done using metaphors and analogies, but also means making certain theoretical assumptions (24). In other words, the process of theorising involves an oscillation, or tension between the creative and the rational; between ‘free’ observation and associations, and critical, scholarly concepts.

But what comes first: theory or theorising? Contrary to Swedberg, Carleheden posits theorising as the *application* of theory: theory comes first (37). For Swedberg, *observation* without theories and concepts must precede any theorising. Yet, as Carleheden argues, how this surprise, creativity, novelty and new discovery occurs when it is impossible to ‘step outside’ of one’s preconceived concepts and judgements is a mystery. For Carleheden, this is the central ‘problem’ for theorising, not the fixedness of theory but rather, “how can we in our conceptualisations be sensitive in relation to the world?” (40). In this chapter I am interested in both Swedberg’s and Carleheden’s concerns, and I think they can be related to utopianism. Or rather, the challenge of theorising, its related problems and potential

solutions, also afflicts the doing of utopianism. The struggle to ‘get outside’ of old concepts and be “sensitive in relation to the world”, to discover its ‘truth’, is, almost paradoxically, the same as the struggle to break ‘out’ of old ‘dead’ theory and find something new, creative or alternative. Strangely, this implies that trying to reach the real and trying to reach the ideal are afflicted by similar difficulties.

The problem might lie in a misunderstanding of what theory does or can do. As Heldke points out, the value of philosophy and theory is not a miraculous ability to “uncover The Real, but because it can create *alternative ways to think about whatever reality it is we’ve inherited/discovered/created*” (16, italics mine). Theories are outlooks, tools, or perspectives, but, crucially, they are outlooks chosen dependent on what it is one hopes to *do or make* (17). As I argued in Chapter One, theories and discourses can be read as utopian (Reedy, Levitas). Heldke invites us to understand theories as tools through an analogy with cooking, an activity which does not suffer from the problem of a theory/practice dichotomy (19). While it may involve applying and altering a instructions, a recipe exists neither in writing nor in food alone, rather, how a recipe is chosen and followed depends on what the cook wants to *do* (17). Whether one is making puff pastry or a stir-fry, cooking on a tight budget or for a flash dinner party, recipes and their specific interpretation, altering or development depends on what one seeks to *do*, and this determines what ingredients are used. This, in a sense, echoes the feminist and anarchist emphasis on means-ends coherence discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

Further, having multiple recipes is important for a variety of occasions; one is not privileged over another *except* in context: what it is one wants to make in a particular situation and for what purpose (Heldke 22-23). In other words, a diversity of strategies, is considered a normal and useful approach. Following a recipe also requires interpretation--

that one think about why the instructions are given in a particular way and if they are relevant to the user's situation (26-27), and the relationship between the recipe (theory) and cook (theorist) (28). Recipes are often flexible, alterable, and cooking is a creative and practical pursuit: however, not infinitely so as, again, it remains tied to what it is one wants to do or create (24). Theory and theorising can be considered along similar lines. Theories are outlooks which we can collect to use for a variety of occasions, their 'meaning' existing only through and by their use, and which can be altered as appropriate to the situation. The point of this lengthy metaphor is, that if theorising is an action used for doing something, then is our inability to escape pre-existing theories and concepts the main problem, so much as how and for what ends these are *used*?

Thinking about theories, scientific ones included, in terms of what they *do* or what one wants them to *do* may also be a more productive response to the problem of "multiple truths" or "alternative facts" which may otherwise induce a kind of panic about a "post truth era", the instability of reality, and the ways in which the powerful use or ignore 'scientific facts'. That is, Heldke's use of this idea to sidestep the realism vs relativism debate in theory, may also be applicable to state and institutional level politics. Where politicians selectively use science to fit their own agendas, scientists are hamstrung if they insist on there being one 'truth', in the face of postmodern theories which insist on multiplicity, plurality and the partiality of knowledge. Yet it would seem that accepting or promoting this idea of 'multiple truths' would leave one powerless to criticise, for example, a politician who denounces climate change. Instead, following Heldke, it is not that 'anything goes' but rather that science and truth can be viewed as tools which *are* multiple, contradictory and fulfil different purposes. Similarly for critical theory and the 'problem' of the fragmentariness of postmodern theory, identity politics and factious political movements, as

Simons and Billig argue, “the problem is not that the postmodernist spirit lacks a critical impulse, but that critique is running rampant without political direction” (qtd. in el-Ojeili 211). Yet as el-Ojeili maintains, there is absolutely the possibility for an effective combining of postmodern critique and the more totalising/universalising goals of an older form of critical thought and activism (“left communism”) in order to advance new types of emancipatory discourse which are both appropriate for this era, and revitalise or reclaim those older goals of Marxism and socialism (211). One way of making sense of this is through viewing all theorising as containing the seeds of the ends one hopes will happen. A more appropriate question might be not what truth ‘is’, but what these various ‘truths’ and theories about the world *do*: *who* they are serving, what *worlds* they are trying to bring about. This of course returns science to politics and to the ground of utopianism.

This means that the problem at hand is not so much that of escaping concepts to find truth, so much as remaining open and creative while also critical and academically constrained: the dichotomy of the creative/critical. In other words, an openness to the possibilities always already *in* the present, but ‘not yet’ conscious (Bloch) or suppressed or oppressed by the particular ways of living denoted by immense power structures and ideologies such as capitalism and patriarchy. This, in a way, is simply a rephrasing of the struggle to ‘get outside of’ pre-judgements, preconceptions and old mental habits (Swedberg 13) in order to ‘see anew’, like the artist or the writer. This is relevant to the utopian effort to imagine differently, and the reality of utopian work which at once reflects the strange, and tries to invoke the unfamiliar or estrange the reader. Shifting the focus from ‘truth’ and observation, to inspiration and creative process, might be a more practical pursuit—the project with which Swedberg seems concerned.

Swedberg stresses the importance of inspiration (6), of art (15), of craft (16), of playfulness (15), of intuition and the subconscious (13) for theorising. Theory (and fiction) can help fuel this creativity by making the world surprising again. As Ahmed recalls of her own experience of coming into contact with feminist theory in which “everything became surprising” it was as if she was “seeing the world for the first time and that all that I took for granted as given—as a question of the way things were—was made, was particular and contingent” (250). For Ahmed, feminism can be wonderful: “it has felt like something creative, something that responds to the world with love and care, as well as an attention to details that are surprising” (249). Perhaps this is the role of theorising, not to produce truths so much as to estrange and evoke wonder.

Wonder and Knowing

Wonder and magic—the miraculous combining of disparate elements (Bennett, “Enchanted” 20)—might be considered important for theorising, particularly when understood in relation to utopianism (McManus). As utopian philosopher Bloch has theorised, astonishment is a philosophical mode, a form of contemplation (Muñoz 5). Bennet points out that magic and miracles are basically already inherent to science. Both reason and novel *thinking*—thinking being the breaking out of the stupor of mundane thought (Deleuze)—is basically miraculous (Bennett, “Enchanted” 21). Interestingly, wonder seems to traverse the creative/critical (or immanent/transcendent): it ruptures the experience of everyday ordinariness and lets in the marvellous and miraculous, yet it is also about scepticism and curiosity which is a desire for knowledge (McManus).

According to McManus, wonder and dreaming are crucial to utopian thinking and their absence in most academic discourse might hinder the inability to think of alternatives. This occurs through the hierarchical ordering of knowledge over wonder because “when wonder is figured as that which is hierarchically subordinate to the order of knowledge proper, knowledge itself can be instrumentalised; we are left with merely the closure of things as they are (positivism)” (McManus n.p). Wonder can be an *affective* desire for knowledge but when knowledge dominates, wonder is extinguished: “wonder is invoked and disavowed in the inscription of a hierarchical distance between the affective and epistemological registers”, something which feminism has also been concerned to note (n.p). It is when wonder is “consumed by knowledge” that utopian “surplus” thought is lost (McManus). The problem then, closely related to the ‘problem’ of concepts and theory, is how wonder can be retained for theorising.

For critical theory, wonder is both politically and epistemologically important: it is “a question of hope, a hope that things can be different, and that the world can take different forms” (Ahmed 251). Rather than considering its ‘true’ or ‘rational’ aspects, we might accept wonder as useful because it is what “energizes the very hope of transformation, the very will to politics” because it suggests that what angers us is not inevitable (250). Or, in Irigaray’s words, “wonder is the motivating force behind mobility in all its dimensions”(qtd. in Ahmed 249). Wonder is arguably more ‘practical’ and useful than rationality in that surprise and wonder, as *affects* and thus embodied, can bring about “new forms of movement, and hence new forms of attachment” (249). Wonder *moves us*, and in this sense returns theorising to the embodied and material realm.

These material and embodied aspects connect theorising to ethics and empathy. As Bennett puts it, “ethical motivation needs also to draw upon co-feeling or sympathy with

suffering, and also upon a certain love of the world, or enchantment with it" ("Steps" 361). Surprise, wonder or, Bennett suggests, "naiveté", are affects which nurture empathetic forms of relating. Naiveté, for Bennett, is a moment in which "it becomes possible to discern a resemblance between one's interior thinghood (e.g bones) and the object-entities exterior to one's body" forming a "sympathetic link" and "a line of flight from the anthropocentrism of everyday experience" which might entail more empathetic ways of relating (366). This moment of surprise, astonishment, wonder or naiveté can open up a gap, a link or line of flight to an alternative. This relates to utopianism because "empathy is, by definition a largely imaginative act" (Seymour 12). In this sense, empathy is the use of the imagination to transcend the gulf between 'self' and 'other', one of the antimonies of utopian thought. Although in much western thought empathy, wonder, naiveté and imagination are characteristics often derided in favour of rationality, it might be argued that wonder and rationality are not incompatible.

Given the importance of action, embodiment and empathy for theorising, it may pay to interrogate another assumption about theorising: that it begins with observation (Swedberg) and that knowledge arises from vision. After all, observation is in no way a neutral activity. Feminist philosophers of science note the significant connections between scientific observation through vision, and 'the gaze' as a practice of objectification and creation of a subject/object separation (Keller and Grontkowski 215; McManus n.p; Wagner-Lawlor x). The privileging of the eye, and of vision, has its basis in mind/body dualism and in a Platonic connection between light and knowledge as 'higher' and of the godly realms (Keller and Grontkowski 215). It separates the 'subject' from the 'object' (216) while reinforcing a distinction between theory and practice through its assumed detachment from the body (219). This disembodiment of vision also places it 'outside' of

time and enables the conceptualisation of an ‘eternal present’, a never changing, always present state, which is how truth and reality are presumed to be (219). However, in the absence of a feminist alternative, Keller and Grontkowski conclude that vision as a primary way of knowing is not in itself androcentric or patriarchal, but its status as *disembodied* is (221). Therefore, the issue is not that vision is androcentric, but that vision is assumed to be ‘objective’ and disembodied (220).

Further, humans may be visual animals, but perhaps not visual *alone*. Keller and Grontkowski invite consideration of how other senses might be used for gaining knowledge. For example, listening, which introduces a temporal element, and touch which dissolves the subject/object dichotomy (221), or what Swedberg refers to as a “general sensibility” beyond cognitive and skills of observation (13). This is important for creativity and ‘thinking’, in the Deleuzian sense, defined as the ‘breaking out’ from ‘thought’ which is defined as the everyday chatter and representation of the world in one’s head (Bennett, “Enchanted” 20). *Thinking* can only occur by breaking out from the stupor of ‘thought’, and this breaking out can only occur *through the senses*, through the difference in intensity, syntheses of disparteness, which is also a basis for wonder (21). Regardless of how natural or inevitable our reliance on vision is, the fact that it is naturally *and* culturally privileged both limits its capacity to invoke a sense of otherness and alterity, but also means that the use of other senses has estranging and interruptive power. This is something McAlpine explores in her novels, which I will consider in the next chapter.

Interestingly, books on creative writing often use aural metaphors: ‘finding your voice’, ‘listening to your unconscious’, ‘listening to your ideas’ (Boulter 14; Peary 94). It would seem that where knowing involves *observing and seeing*; being creative and artful occurs by *listening*. However, it is not clear why aural metaphors could not be used in

relation to modes of knowing or wondering. Granted, it may be more difficult to represent sound: perhaps unlike the things we can see, sound is always more than representational—musicians do not learn to play by reading music on a page. Significantly, sound being temporal negates the notion of a permanent unchanging reality. Yet if the way for the craftsperson-social theorist/researcher to ‘know’ the materials they are working with is *empathy* (Swedberg 16), then this might be done better through the *ears* than *eyes*.

Listening, giving *voice* to, *speaking* for, lending an *ear*, are the metaphors used in social justice movements and, on a smaller scale, other practices of empathy. We tend to listen to, rather than observe, the struggles of another. Following Bennett, remaining ‘enchanted’ with the world fosters empathy, and “enchantment”, based on the word ‘chant’ has connotations of singing (Bennett “Enchanted” 2).

From such a perspective, the great emphasis on disembodied vision and observation for knowledge acquisition is rather strange. Theorising is also a *craft* because tacit knowledge is important: the *hand* knows better and the crafter develops a “special relationship” to the material they work with; how things *feel* and behave and for a social scientist this means understanding intimately how people feel and behave or, in other words, empathy (Swedberg 16). Part of this craft of theorising also involves the craft of writing. Richardson and St. Pierre call writing a ‘method of inquiry’ and an activity which usurps method, analysis and perhaps also theorising. Writing is not simply a tool of representation, “writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery”, as many in the humanities are well aware (St. Pierre 967). St. Pierre describes her own process of using writing to collect data “by gathering together, by collecting—in *the writing*—all sorts of data I had never read about in interpretative textbooks, some of which I have called *dream data*, *sensual data*, *emotional data*, *response*

data (St. Pierre, 1997b), and *memory data*" (970). Often, she finds, "*thought happened in the writing*. As I wrote, I watched word after word appear on the computer screen—ideas, theories, I had not thought of before I wrote them. Sometimes...it startled me. *I doubt I could have thought such a thought by thinking alone*" (970). This seems quite different to approaching data through visual observation.

Important to St. Pierre's argument, and similar to Heldke's recipes, interpretation is not about 'discovering' meaning, but introducing it. Language does not simply transport meaning from one person to another (St. Pierre 968), and meaning is not fixed but is always deferred: "the thing itself always escapes" as Derrida puts it (968). Thus it becomes pertinent to ask, "*what else might writing do except mean?*" (969). Invoking the question of representation and *postrepresentation* (971), St. Pierre remarks that while "in interpretative research we believe representation is possible, if perhaps unsafe, but we do it anyway with anxious disclaimers. In postmodern research, we believe it isn't possible *or* safe, and so we shift the focus entirely" and instead "question a science whose goal is representation" (971). This makes pertinent the question 'what else might writing do except mean?' What other 'goals' could research and theorising possibly have? Again, the interest is in what research and theorising *does* rather than what it is said to represent.

Significantly, St. Pierre suggests that writing as inquiry and discovery is inseparable from a project of ethics, social justice and imagining otherwise. In the Baudrillardian sense, writing is *simulation* which can be used to disrupt the known and the real (St Pierre 967). Writing as inquiry can carry us "across our thresholds, toward a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent" (Deleuze and Parnet, qtd. in St Pierre 972) perhaps towards what Derrida calls "the democracy to come" (qtd. in St Pierre 972). Drawing on these ideas, that we must accept and welcome an alterity which cannot be

predicted, St. Pierre links meaning and ethics. For ethics, “*meaning will always come too late to rescue us*” so it is not ‘meaning’ that is being sought after all (972). In a strikingly utopian passage, St. Pierre hopes that postmodern theorising will, following Deleuze, call for renewed “belief in the world” and “I hope will enable relations less impoverished than the ones we have thus far imagined and lived” (972). Ambitiously, St Pierre, through Deleuze, suggests that writing as inquiry, as postrepresentation, is a kind of utopian project.

This seems to bear some similarities to Adorno’s emphasis on “that which is essentially unknowable” (Bennett “Steps” 364). Various referred to as *difference* (Derrida), *the virtual* (Deleuze), *the invisible* (Merleau-Ponty), *the semiotic* (Kristeva) and *nonidentity* (Adorno) (in Bennett 361), this never quite (or not-yet) graspable aspect of things is both negative and excessive. It exceeds being put into forms or objects, but also it is a negativity out of which ‘positive’ things are born. Bennett writes of a “negativity that is profoundly productive: the materiality that resists us is also the protean source of being, the essentially vague matrix of things.” (361). This version of negativity might be read as utopian in the sense of something which is ‘not yet’ here or not yet conscious (Bloch 42). Bloch’s utopian impulse being “not-yet” means that “Bloch locates the positive drive toward the future in the negative, in the radical insufficiency of the present” (Moylan, *Demand* 22)---the not yet is inherently a negative or non.

Yet this ‘non-ness’ is also profoundly frustrating, even painful. For Adorno, nonidentity “presents itself as a painful and nagging sense that something’s being forgotten or left out” (Bennett “Steps” 362). Nonidentity and “a world that refuses to offer the “reconcilement” between concept and thing, self and other, nature and culture—that we (are said to) desire” are painful to the human subject (362). For Bennett, critical reflection, taking the inevitable failure of conceptualisations less seriously, and allowing in utopian

thinking, can provide the antidote to the “rage” against nonidentity that Adorno sees as responsible for cruelty and violence (363). A response or way of lessening the desire to totally reconcile concept and thing, self and other, nature and culture, resides in Bennett’s thing-power materialism because it promotes an understanding that everything is already participating in “a common materiality” (“Steps” 362). This is an idea I will revisit in the next two chapters.

This kind of simultaneous excess and negativity may also be crucial for the creative process, and, I am arguing, theorising alternatives. The creative process itself, according to Brace and Johns-Putra, may be more-than-representational. Similarly, capturing the realities of social life through concepts seems frequently elusive, yet these, like words for the creative writer, cannot be dispensed with (Swedberg and Carleheden). If inspiration and creative processes are in part “a lived experience which defies expression” (Brace and Johns-Putra 406), non-representational theory which emphasises the practices “that cannot adequately be spoken of, that words cannot capture, that texts cannot convey” (Nash qtd. in Brace and Johns-Putra 406) might be useful. Non-representational theory does not dispense with representations, but “reanimates them as active and affective interventions in a world of relations and movement” (McCormack qtd. in Brace and Johns-Putra 403) and highlights the process and embodied practices and being in the world which lead to representations, acknowledging that we always know more than we can tell (403). This, I argue, might be seen as useful for thinking about theorising given that, as I have argued (Chapter One and Chapter Three), the line between literature and theory is a fine one, particularly in the context of utopian writing.

Creative writing shares with theorising a negotiation between the creative and the critical which has seemed resistant to explanation. It involves both a magical flash of

inspiration and creativity, and a slower process of germination, incubation, steeping, nurturing, perhaps even involving ignoring or deferring writing ideas (Brace and Johns-Putra 405; Boulter 15). Creative writing theorists hold similar ideas to social critical theorists regarding the process of discovery or creation, and the struggle to get ‘outside’ of old mental patterns to ‘see anew’ which Swedberg identifies (13). Like writers of theory, creative writers often oscillate between these two phases of elusive, creative and unexplainable inspiration or feeling, and a phase of so-called agentic and active *doing* of the writing—experienced as solitary, self-conscious, purposeful and reflective (Brace and Johns-Putra 402; Sharples 8). Allowing time and process for ‘steeping’ or ‘fermenting’ is noted by some writers to be important (Brace and Johns-Putra 406). Larvality, impulses and not-yets, thus seem crucial to this process.

For Boulter, part of preparing for writing involves learning to perceive the world in different ways, so that “being a stranger on our streets means that we try to rub away the grime of habit and see the physical, social and emotional realities of place in new ways” (Boulter 11). This parallels Swedberg’s and Carleheden’s concerns to ‘see the world anew’ (Carleheden 40; Swedberg 13), and also, incidentally, the utopian function of estrangement and imagining alternatives (Moylan, *Demand* 33). It would seem then, that both creativity and theorising might relate to the utopianist’s immanence and transcendence of reality, realism and boundary pushing at once. Perhaps to an extent, this also relates to immanence and transcendence or estrangement and working through this dichotomy is part of writing theory and fiction. As T. S. Eliot has said, most of what a writer does is actually *critical* labour “sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing...a frightful toil as much critical as creative” (qtd. in Boulter 2). Further Boulter suggests that critical theory is a creative resource: while often seen by writers as dry and devoid of creativity, she argues

that critical theory can also supply inspiration (Boulter 5). Perhaps then, critical theory, when viewed as creative resource, already crosses the creative/critical divide.

While it is a myth to assume that writing is ‘pure inspiration’, like for utopias, absolute control and rationality seem often troublesome to writing. For example, ‘writer’s block’ is sometimes seen as resulting from a misplaced effort to control (Peary). Seemingly, the more one thinks about writing, the more difficult it becomes, and yet it can also be an automatic activity for many people (Sharples 2). This has resonance with another utopian problem: that the more a utopian society tends towards perfection, the less utopian alterity it seems to harbour. Similarly, the more theorists try to explain (in rational terms) phenomena, the less wondrous the subject appears. In all of these cases, privileging rationality over wonder represents an attempt to control. Efforts to control seem to work against utopian alterity and wonder, and yet utopian visions in critical theory and fiction also constitute attempts to shape or direct utopian impulses, as the texts used in Part One illustrate.

It is important to somehow retain both wonder and knowledge without ordering them hierarchically (McManus), and it seems as if this is what writing theorists recommend. This is perhaps why Sharples refers to writing as a design activity and as “constraint satisfaction” (6). Writing as a design activity includes a set of constraints, external representations, resources and tools (10). The constraints, perhaps like Heldke’s recipes, allow writers to seemingly produce material with ease (10). Further, constraints (like recipes or utopian intentions) can facilitate creativity where they make up interesting structures onto which creativity can build, or out of which it can break, to produce new, original constraints (10). In a sense, constraints might be seen as not just repressive or holding back, but also about grounding and establishing a utopian direction, in a sense like Irigaray’s use

of boundaries (Chapter Four). Perhaps most relevantly to academic writing, writers, like the designer, produce texts which become the *source material* for inspiring later contemplation and it is through this approach that deliberative planning and chance discovery are combined in the writing process (Sharples 10). In this way, the new or novel, always comes from prior material which already exists.

The design metaphor implies that writers and theorists do not so much genius-ly conjure up material 'from within', but make and then use a range of materials or 'tools'. If we think of concepts and theories as always about their use (as Wittgenstein says of words), as always oriented towards making or doing something as does a recipe (Heldke), and as always containing some kind of utopianism (St Pierre), then perhaps theories and concepts do not desensitise us to the world (Carleheden, Swedberg), but like writing constraints, can lead to creativity and new ways of 'seeing'. Concepts, like writing constraints, can be worked within, challenged and broken in order to create new ones which will also eventually be reworked in an ongoing process of creation and improvement. This is the never-ending process of utopianism, the creation and critique of utopias and utopian ideas, or social, self and cultural transformation. But in the face of urgent social, cultural and ecological problems, is it enough to say that utopianism is ongoing, that improvement is always 'not yet' and should never arrive? Is it enough to continually defer, to constantly 'problematise' without 'setting down' or living out stable visions such as authors like Le Guin, Piercy and Bravo produce? Like utopianism, theory and creative texts must remain alive and elusive in order for theorising to continue. Yet to continually privilege openness, flux, instability, the "potential...not the actual...that matters" (Cederström and Spicer), seems to suit postmodern capitalism rather too well. Utopianism and radical change also require *doing something*, setting *something* down: just for a moment.

Chapter Seven: Awakening the Sleeping Islands: Rachel McAlpine's *The Limits of Green* (1985) and *Running Away from Home* (1987)

One of the places that utopian ideas can be set down is of course fiction and it is to this realm that I now return. Fiction can be considered a space in which utopianism is organically worked out in “practice”—the practice of writing discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I consider two novels by the New Zealand author Rachel McAlpine. Although *The Limits of Green* (1985) and *Running Away from Home* (1987) are not usually considered ‘utopias’, I read these novels as (critically) ‘utopian’ or ‘utopianistic’. On my reading, they invite the reader to consider different ways of knowing and being through their critique of realism and authority, by foregrounding women’s embodied experience, exploring the supernatural, and for the ways in which these are played-off against each other. While not overwhelmingly optimistic, I read these novels as nonetheless putting forward a hopeful message of a ‘new world in the shell of the old’ which troubles more ‘pure’ or simple versions of utopianism. McAlpine’s fictional extrapolations are not utopic in that they imagine any new society in its entirety. Rather, these texts are utopic for their assertions that there are other ways of being and living in the world, and to this extent they align with the feminist utopian project to ‘transform consciousness’ (Sargisson *Contemporary* 229).

More generally, this reading of McAlpine’s texts is part of a wider attempt to acknowledge texts which may not be immediately recognizable as utopian or as expressing utopian impulses, the documentation of which is part of delineating the broader utopian discourse which this thesis is an attempt to conceptualise. In this instance I am interested in how McAlpine plays with ideas about experiencing and knowing which rescues them from

bland and reductive norms which may stifle utopian impulses. This is political because of the ways McAlpine links these utopian yearnings with women's experiences and nonhuman nature, as well as political in the sense that these texts explicitly critique globalising power, environmental exploitation, patriarchy and colonisation. I suggest that reading such texts via utopianism might help to elucidate some of the nuances mentioned so far in the thesis. Namely, this chapter continues a discussion about how it is possible (or not) to 'think' utopically, the 'problem' of getting 'outside', the dichotomy of immanence and transcendence, and what anarchism, ecogism and feminism look like depicted in process. In the next two chapters, I read these texts in parallel to utopian theory, new materialist theory (Bennett, Morton, Latour, Deleuze), as well as anarchist and feminist concepts, looking for resonances and sympathies between these texts and discourses. In doing so I consider what these discourses might collectively say about utopianism, alterity, the nonhuman and the 'more than representable' (Brace and Johns-Putra 406) as discussed in the previous chapter.

As I argued in Chapter Six, writing, and theorising might be understood as attempts to cross the 'real life' and representation divide, a function which can be seen as akin to utopianism in that utopias are both representations of what is not yet, and interventions and actions in the present. In this chapter I probe into this sense of the 'non' or not-yet and its immanent qualities a little further. In a sense, this is another way of describing the utopian function which involves some kind of estrangement, projection and imagination in order to see clearly, or differently, the reader's or author's own present, but in this chapter I am seeking to explore this through texts which have not been established as utopias or utopian. In a similar example, literary critics of Janet Frame's fiction, find that she complicates the distinction between realism and surrealism. Alex Calder ventures that

“reality for Frame always harbours “something different, something nobody counted on” and Delrez puts this by way of “a dimension which cannot be apprehended unless one agrees to abandon a limiting form of realism” (qtd. in Delrez xv). Delrez calls this “other dimension” in Frame’s work difficult to circumscribe and that it “testifies to a form of utopianism which perhaps by definition eludes our traditional grids of reading” (xv), again much like Sargisson’s argument regarding utopianism. Although not depictions of utopian societies, fictional work such as Frame’s can be read as written from a “utopian pole” and gesturing towards a utopian “expansion of boundaries” an “over-reaching into the unknown” (xvi). It is curious to contemplate what this “over-reaching” might entail, and here I explore this in relation to two of McAlpine’s novels.

Such efforts to ‘over-reach’ or transcend resonate with what critical theorists of the Frankfurt School have posited about the purpose of art, as mentioned in Chapter Three, as well as the yearning towards ‘other’ ways of experiencing, knowing, being and creating transformation characteristic of feminist utopian texts, as noted in Chapter One. To reiterate, critical theorists of The Frankfurt School, such as Marcuse, were optimistic about the capacity of (certain forms of) art and literature to express ideas and values that rupture with the present, namely, “the façade of capitalist life” (el-Ojeili 236). Art can convey ideas, ways of thinking, or ways of being which cannot be expressed in the dominant discourse, and are therefore revolutionary and utopian. In Chapter Three I looked at depictions of ‘ways of life’ in Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* and Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* and suggested that depictions of anarcho-syndicalism and participatory democracy is one way in which feminist utopian writers have engaged with the imagining of unmediated and non-hierarchical forms of relating. This is a somewhat social-realist or sociological reading, which is one way of looking at utopian texts, but which alone may not quite grasp the subversive

challenge in feminist utopian writing. This chapter deviates from this kind of reading of utopianism to delve into some more textual and discursive elements such as McAlpine's work conveys, being texts which are not *utopias* in the sense of depicting a full and complete alternative, but *utopian* in the sense that the *process* of resistance and *ways of being* are depicted in ways which I want to suggest can be read as utopian.

This reading is consistent with previous interpretations of the place of realism and surrealism or fantasy in feminist utopian writing. Moylan interprets Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* as activist not just in its depiction of an anarcha-feminist society, but activist in that its utopianism challenges the limits of literary realism and dystopian fiction (148). It is thus a kind of "combative engagement with those literary practices that, in the twentieth century at least, have tended to reinforce the ideological claim that a social alternative to what currently exists is impossible" (148). Realism, or rather, what comes to pass as realistic because it accurately reflects the present, functions to enforce the status-quo and is not particularly amenable to imagining alterity and possibilities for ways of being and living. Piercy "challenges realism, in all its associations with things as they are and "must be", from outside the limits of the genre by attacking with the fantasizing power of utopian science fiction. In the fantastic mode, Piercy can break the rules of the historical situations and posit a future society with the power to reach back in time" which means helping Connie bring about this future utopia (150).

While McAlpine's novels have not been paid this sort of attention, I suggest here that they might be read in a similar light. There is little literature and criticism of these novels. The *Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature* describes *Limits* as a futuristic novel in which "a pair of greenies defeat the evil industrialists and destroy their lethal enterprises" (316). Mark Williams derides *Limits* as "magic realism without the realism" that

“makes one nostalgic for the tradition derived from Sargeson such writing is supposedly replacing (qtd. in 316). More sympathetically, Fay Weldon praises McAlpine as “the only New Zealand writer taking risks and letting herself go” (316). McAlpine’s willingness to unashamedly engage with politically topical concerns of her time while also denouncing realism has earned her both derision and admiration.

In response to this kind of dismissal of escapist and fantastical depictions of activism, I suggest that *The Limits of Green* might be read as a utopian-esque novel, which is critical and visionary. I suggest that the use of the fantastical does something other than represent reality in an estranged or escapist way, because, as I suggested in Chapter Six, art and writing aren’t just representations but practices and contexts in their own right, even as they are a part of this ‘real’ world. From such a perspective, McAlpine’s use of the fantastical and supernatural is not just transcendent and escapist but a mode of critique of the dominance of realism as a literary and theoretical mode. This is political at another level, because of how realism, scientific positivism and logocentrism act as forms of social and cultural control often entwined with masculine dominance.

Appearing in the aftermath of neoliberal reforms in Aotearoa New Zealand and at a time of rising environmental consciousness, *The Limits of Green* can be read in relation to environmentalist, feminist and anarchist discourses. Set in the “Sleeping Islands” which is a fictionalization of Aotearoa New Zealand, *Limits* occurs within a future or alternative world which is dominated by the new empire of “RUSA” (presumably an amalgam of Russia and the US). In this dystopic future, RUSA uses Aotearoa as a place to manufacture nuclear power, weapons, and toxic herbicides to the detriment of the ecology of the Sleeping Islands. As Sargent mentions in his article on New Zealand utopianism, *Limits* is a novel which weaves together utopian, eutopian and dystopian elements in a complicated way and

might be read as a warning or prediction of coming threats of corporate power and environmental degradation (Sargent, "Utopianism and the Creation of NZ National Identity" 13). In particular, the novel might be read as critique of totalitarianism and nuclear warfare. However the story itself is not a dystopia: it is about a plan for resistance, mainly by the women characters in the novel. The protagonist, Omelette, becomes involved in various non-violent strategies of resistance which culminate in the destruction of a nuclear power plant and communications station near her home. This is facilitated by Omelette's fantastical ability to compose music which causes rapid growth in plants, eventually helping to create giant and monstrous plants which destroy the nuclear power plant.

McAlpine's later novel, *Running Away from Home*, presents similar themes relating to environmentalist action and feminism. Perhaps more overtly feminist in its critique, this novel more explicitly examines the political and personal details of women's lives, and mother-daughter relationships. Narrated by Dorothy, the story follows her mother, Fern, who flees first her life as a housewife, and then an employee, journeying across the island to eventually arrive at the house of Hattie at Fish Beach. Rather than escapist, Fern's new life leads her to become entwined with ecological and nuclear politics as she and the like-minded people she encounters become absorbed in rebuilding the beach which is eroding with rising sea levels. In a strange turn of events, they find themselves in a violent confrontation from a visiting RUSAN General who is responsible for making globally significant decisions about nuclear war, and the killing of whom apparently ends this threat. Like McAlpine's earlier novel, *Running* deals with the global politics of RUSA and the Sleeping Islands, clearly reflecting the nuclear politics of the 1980s and New Zealand's actual stance on nuclear weapons which was topical at the time of its writing. McAlpine's mix of historical events, reflecting an assertion of New Zealand identity and autonomy, combined

with her futuristic, fantastic, utopic and uchronic elements perhaps could be said to reveal the utopianism in the cultural nationalist project, and the utopianism in the search for personal and cultural identity. My interest here, however, is on the ways in which McAlpine's work seems to evoke the 'not yet' of utopianism.

While difficult to grasp and consisting of no particular utopian vision, the utopianism in these novels might constitute a utopia, or utopianism, in process. I suggest that this utopianism has to do with three things. Firstly, the contestation of power and efforts to reverse the dystopianism in the novel and in doing so bringing a 'new world into life'. Secondly, the depiction of 'other' or fantastical ways of being relating to plants, touch, women's experiences and music. Thirdly, it might represent an effort to transform consciousness through foregrounding plant and nonhuman agency. In these ways, it echoes many elements of feminist utopian texts, in particular an interest in interior states (Baum 226; Fancourt 95; Silbergleid 160), embodiment (Burwell 84), the hopeful within the dystopian (Baccolini, "Dystopia Matters" 3) and the transformation of consciousness (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 229). Unlike *The Dispossessed*, *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and "Not a Favour to Women", neither of McAlpine's novels depict a possible anarchist or feminist society as such. In fact, her depictions of small cooperative groups, rather than a large utopian society, might be read as *anarchist* and as a form of doing utopianism which deviates from social planning. Rather than a shortcoming, the absence of a blueprint makes these two novels all the more provoking. In keeping with other critical feminist utopian work, the unfolding action, relationships and embodied experiences are more important than blueprint design or structure, and in this sense her method coheres with her depictions of activism and direct action (Graeber, *Direct Action* 506), which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Realism and Authority

In both its plot and framing, *Limits* depicts resistance and challenge to authority. The characters in the novel are engaged in transgressive acts, and the text itself, like many utopian texts, challenges the construction of reality and truth in relation to power.

Traditional of utopias (More's *Utopia*, *Erewhon*, *Gulliver's Travels*), the prologue of *Limits* (n.p) functions as an authoritative account which is often used to assure the reader that what follows is 'true' and in this way it is used for satire and playing with ideas of truth and authority. In *Limits* the opening authoritative account takes the form of a letter to the Minister of Colonial Policy in RUSA from Bernard O'Hagan, first secretary. It is explained that the "document enclosed" (the novel) is by Mrs James Andrews, the neighbour and friend of Grace Ruysel (nee Smith), the 'real' name of Omelette, the protagonist of the story.

According to O'Hagan, although "at first reading it may seem to be the memoirs of a naïve, fanciful woman, and might be dismissed as fictionalised hysteria", the text is dressed up in a fanciful narrative to hide the fact that it is actually a piece of "dangerous" anti-RUSA propaganda—smuggling in the resistance. This might be read as a comment on the double negation of utopianism and women's voices alike. Utopian thought and women's ideas are at once dismissed as too 'fanciful' and 'hysterical' to be taken seriously, and yet at the root of this rejection lies a fear that implies that they are serious enough to be considered dangerous.

Rather like the conflict between the realist narrative of the hospital reports which frame the end of *Woman on the Edge of Time* and Connie's narrative of the utopia of future Mattapoissett (Moylan, *Demand* 148) this confusion over authorial voice requires that the

reader must constantly ask whose story this is. Is it O'Hagan's who opens the account? Is it Gabrielle Andrews', the elusive 'I' in the story? Is it Mary's whose account appears first? Is it Omelette's who appears to be the protagonist in the story but to whose thoughts we are not privy, and whose centrality in the narrative is not consistent? Is it Annabelle's, whose story sits as a 'story within a story'? This tension requires the reader to question the authority inherent in authorship, and McAlpine depicts authoritative figures in such a way that critiques masculine violence, authority, and rational androcentric perspectives.

Dominant discourses, as Levitas, Jacques and other theorists point out, are also always utopian in the sense that they contain ideals about reality which do not necessarily match with what that reality is like (Jacques 29; Levitas, *Utopia* xi). McAlpine's novel, positing the rational and the fantastical against each other, while subversively undermining the rational and reinforcing the fantastical, shows the utopianism of dominant 'rational' and masculine perspectives.

The broader narrative depicts the rational masculinity, embodied in the state, the law and capitalism as quite illogical and fantastical. For example, at one point the narrator critiques how the state confuses abstract capital with the real material environment saying that "even a child could see that this was fantasy money, we were selling our land, our sea, our air, the real stuff, for a handful of Monopoly money" (McAlpine, *Limits* 80) This points to the fictionality of the law or the economy, where those with power construct truths which may not align with the realness of nonhuman nature and the material resources which people need to survive. Similarly, "overseas funds is a phrase, it isn't a physical fact. An arbitrary mental construct is no excuse for lunatic behaviour"(132). This can be read as an ironic reversal of who gets called a 'lunatic'—not the 'mad activist' utopians but the so-called rational men and authorities who mistake language or notions for 'real' or physical

facts like the material environment. Despite claims to rationality and the ability to categorise actions into either 'right' or 'wrong', Omelette's criticism is that so-called rational actors pick and choose based on what suits them under the veil of the law or rationality or what is 'right'. This elucidates what Heldke notes regarding truth as not essentialist or relativist, but politically constituted and based around intentions for action.

Other Ways of Being and Knowing

The constant tension between realism and the fantastical, between the authoritative accounts of male characters in the text and the embodied, lived experiences of women means that the reader must constantly ask not just whose story this is, but also who to believe. Through women and resistant figures in the text (including male characters such as George) McAlpine imagines alternative ways of being, knowing and experiencing, as a feminist utopian act. As Sargisson suggests, feminist utopian texts demand not just 'consciousness raising', but 'consciousness changing': the desire to alter, transform or explore 'consciousness' itself (*Contemporary* 229). That is, feminist utopian novels often depict, and require, a shift in thinking, of experiencing and interpreting the world, and of what immaterial and material things might be possible if this consciousness is experienced differently. In contrast to the detached, authoritative accounts of dominant discourses, McAlpine explores more embodied ways of relating to the world such as through listening, or sound.

Omelette writes magical music inspired by tactile encounters with plants which in turn cause accelerated plant growth. She "found a few musical fragments which warmed her up with pleasing speed: the bougainvillea, date palm and jacaranda fragments, which

had been rejected long ago because there seemed to be a meteorological struggle taking place within them" (McAlpine, *Limits* 103). She also claims that the only way of finding the root of power is to listen for it, rather than look for it. While this seems fantastical or supernatural, it is also embodied and realistic as it has its basis in an exploration of the potentials of actual human senses. As Morton puts it, sound is physical: "the physicality and materiality of the language... is strongly environmental. A guitar note brings to mind the wood out of which it is made" (Morton, *Ecology* 40). McAlpine's fantastical depictions of what sound can do might be read then, as a critique of the naturalisation of vision as the primary mode for encountering the world, putting forward sound as an alternative—an alternative which already exists. This 'magical' alternative then, is arguably immanent rather than transcendent of 'what is'.

To some extent McAlpine's *Limits* can be read as an illustration or extrapolation of what some feminist philosophers and epistemologists posit regarding alternative ways of knowing, and the possibility of knowledge based not in vision and cartesian dualism, but other senses too (Keller and Grontkowski 221) (as discussed in Chapter Six). Vision is a sense which creates distance and arguably contributes to the dichotomous creation of subjects and objects so for feminist epistemologists, vision and objectification often go hand in hand (215). McAlpine's exploration of sound, music and plants can be read as a way of imagining how humans can encounter nonhuman nature in ways less objectifying, meaning that nonhuman nature can then *affect* the human which in the novel opens possibilities for collaborative resistance. McAlpine's emphasis and exploration of the physicality of sound can be read as an imaginative alternative which suggests other ways of being in the world and other forms of 'knowing' the 'other'.

It is significant that the depiction of direct action or resistance is simultaneously at the textual level a challenge to realism. The final act which destroys the nuclear power plant involves singing to the trees and doing a rain dance to accelerate plant growth and the creation of a supernatural or fantastical rainbow in which the activists are all entangled in quite bodily ways.

Omelette felt herself arch and be the rainbow's rising, stretched twanging over the earth, harmonic pulse in the curve of the world itself. George grew and grew till he stood with one foot planted at each end of the rainbow, growing deep and comfortable into the soil and into the clay...Di looked down to see herself multi-coloured...Belle felt her strength inflate with every heartbeat, she could feel the moon rolling through her arteries. Jenny wept tears of clear water, rainwater, mountain river water, without any trace of salt. And Andrea was the magnet, the lightening rod of earth and stone. (McAlpine, *Limits* 187)

We're told that the rainbow breaks and becomes "gelatinous substance...tissue with life" and they know they are watching "a new world sprouting into life" (187). Published in the same year of the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior* and of protest against nuclear testing in the Pacific, the rainbow imagery is perhaps not coincidental. Yet whether this passage should be taken literally or metaphorically is left ambiguous. The reader is faced with the choice between believing the vivid and everyday accounts of women with semi supernatural or spiritual powers, and between the male authorities in the novel who are providing more 'rational' accounts but also believe in fantasy "monopoly money" (80) and generally just make up the rules of the game as they go along.

Ways of Living

Similar to Le Guin and Piercy's critique of property and hierarchy, McAlpine's novels also suggest some more domestic alternatives in relation to ways of life. In particular, a search for 'home', a utopian hospitality (Wagner-Lawlor 19), or, hospitality and mutualism as alternative to property. Many feminist utopian novels foreground the theme of 'home' or a house, belonging, having a place, having space or as Wagner-Lawlor puts it, a "search for a way to a home that the feminist subject has never inhabited" (Wagner-Lawlor 20). Pearson also notes the importance of the figure of the home or house in feminist utopian fiction which erases "the division between the inhumane marketplace and the humane hearth" and instead bases "the entire society on the principles which ideally have governed the home" (Pearson 52). Crucially, this may not involve romanticising the home as it is as a perfect model, but critiquing and reconceptualising it. Given that domesticity has also imprisoned women, they may be well positioned to understand the ways in which the family and the home is not a nurturing space and are therefore able to re-imagine it, for example, beyond the domination of a patriarch and a closed nuclear set-up, perhaps expanding to more communal arrangements (Pearson 52). Hattie's home can be read as one such kind of exploration.

As Relf notes, many women's utopias express whether explicitly or not, a "desire for a return to the mother", a kind of coming "home" to a "mother-and-child idyll in which the divided self is healed and restored to a sense of wholeness" and this maps onto the "regressive desire" to return to the "illusory perfection of the pre-linguistic mother/child dyad of Kristeva's semiotic *chora*" (Relf 135). In *Running* Fern's journey which takes her first

away from her marital home, then away from her property to the home of Hattie might be read as an expression of a search for a never-known mother. Yet in a comical twist on this trope, Hattie *mistakes* Fern for one of her children, and this turns out to be inconsequential. In this sense, authenticity of lineage is tossed aside. Hattie is not especially concerned with who Fern is, and declares that “you’ll just have to take me as you find me, that’s all there is about it” (*Running* 103). Although it is Hattie who is offering hospitality to Fern, it is Hattie who asks for acceptance. This seems to evoke a more egalitarian version of inclusion as the two embark on a mutualistic living situation (108) and Hattie’s home becomes symbolic of feminist utopian hospitality.

Perhaps as a contrast to ‘property’, then, like many feminist utopias *Running* depicts hospitality (Wagner-Lawlor 19) as an alternative way in which to find ‘home’. Rejecting the myth of the independent ‘self made man’ through employment, accumulation of wealth and property, Fern’s finding of ‘self’ relies on the hospitality of others, and Hattie in particular. Hattie accommodates strangers in her small house at Fish Beach: Fern, Dorothy, Orlando, Doug and his three horses, people to whom she is not related or connected in any way. Hattie’s philosophy is that “people are mostly all right. You just have to make enough room for them. There’s usually enough room” (236). This might be read as a feminist, socialist, anarchist or communist attitude towards inclusivity.

However, the notion of refuge and the boundaries on which this concept is dependent, is also problematised, and McAlpine’s novels can be read as negating the idea of separatist utopic spaces based on exclusion. In *Limits* discourses of escape and refuge are particularly undermined through the stories of Annabel and Eve, daughters of Edward, a cousin of the narrator. Edward, a one-time lover of Omelette’s and agent for RUSA, is a dominating, controlling and emotionally abusive father and husband, whose obsession with

rationality and perfection drives his wife and his daughter Eve to insanity (*Limits* 50). In an effort to find “the one place her father could not penetrate, namely her stomach” (*Limits* 53) Eve self-starves in what is for her a kind of a ‘pleasing’ pattern, a kind of refuge/prison. In a sense, Eve’s anorexia might be read as a utopian impulse driven to a logical extreme: a desire for ideal femininity (thin and infantile) and the rejection of the fertile and exploitable and sexualised feminine body (for which women are punished) (Bordo 47). To Edward, Eve’s anorexia is a problem to be solved, much like how the medical model views anorexia, whereas “it was not a problem to Eve, but a solution” (*Limits* 53). Tragically, this resembles another form of escapism towards ideals which eventually culminate in Eve’s death. Like end-state utopias, Eve embodies a form of idealism which functions as both aspiration and escapism. While ‘illogical’ and devastating, for Eve it is a solution to an unbearable situation, perhaps like many utopias.

Against this repressive authoritarianism, Eve’s sister Annabel yearns for escape from her situation becoming for a time a figure of hope and resistance, as she carefully plots and enacts her escape (*Limits* 52). The narrator frames Annabel’s escape as heroic and “a braver thing than most of us are called upon to do” (*Limits* 56). The implication is that, like Moylan and Seabury note of Connie’s situation in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Annabel has no better choice in a tragic and repressive situation (Moylan, *Demand* 125; Seabury 153). Annabel runs away to live in an abandoned tower which, unbeknownst to her, is located on a RUSA communications station and nuclear testing site, and comes to an agreement with the caretaker that he will permit her to live there in ‘exchange’ for sexual exploitation. McAlpine temporarily presents this figure of hope, or yearning for escape only to undermine it: “her plan for escape had a shape, though it carried no further than that, just an exit like

her sister's" (*Limits* 54). In this way, the limits and tragedy of hope is explored and sent to another death-like conclusion.

The figures of Eve and Annabel might be read as two forms of escapism from an overly controlling form of utopianism (that of their father's and society's), only to repeat the same totalising mistakes: death and another prison, mirroring the realities of the actual positions in which many women find themselves. Rather like Connie in *Woman* whose attempts at escape and resistance only leads to her further imprisonment within the medical system, Annabel is trapped again. This time, she becomes stuck in a cycle of paying rent through sexual exploitation---not a fiction, but a reality for many women living under patriarchal capitalism. That is, under patriarchal structures, private property and ownership exploits and endangers women in very particular ways, trapping women in abusive situations. Property is an act of violence which keeps people out and prevents free movement (Jones 237) significantly limiting women's choices and the possibility of escape from situations of domestic violence and sexual exploitation. Taken together, Annabel and Eve's 'escapes' and new forms of imprisonment, their search for control and certainty, is the effect of free movement being denied to women living under capitalist patriarchy. However, such a search driven to its logical conclusion is death. Women are caught in a double bind then, where searching for autonomy (control, freedom) winds up leading to imprisonment because there is nowhere else for women to go. This points to a 'dark' side of utopianism, and a kind of inevitability inherent in utopian resistance (which will be explored further in Chapter Ten).

Utopia and Destruction

That destruction might be necessary for bringing about the new is a theme explored in both *Limits* and *Running*. To begin with, the origins of Omelette's name are apparently in a comment from a doctor to her mother, Mary, while pregnant with Omelette, hinting strongly at the destructive nature of creation. Although the surrounding circumstances of Omelette's conception are ambiguously virginal, the doctor informs Mary that "you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs' That's what he said" (*Limits* 13). The implication of this statement is that there must be destruction for creation, a theme carried forward in relation to the production of nuclear power and herbicides, and the exploitation of the nonhuman environment to finance Sleeping Island debt. The logic is that while this might cause destruction, it is necessary for 'creation' and continuation. In other words, the destruction of nonhuman nature the "selling off of our land, our sea, our sky" is justified by the benefit of an alliance with RUSA and the influx of capital: "monopoly money" (80). However this reading of creative destruction is reversed where the creation of a "new world sprouting into life" comes from the activists' and plants' destruction of the nuclear power plant (187). This in turn is caused by the eventual growth of the monstrous plants which have been 'damaged' by the nuclear waste which has caused mutations. This might be read as a comment on how the destruction of capitalism and power will bring about a new kind of world: a different use for creative destruction and a different meaning for Omelette's namesake.

In this way, McAlpine explores how growth can be destructive and creative. When following an operation to remove cysts the doctor informs Mary that "the growths are benign" (*Limits* 21) Mary replies, "I imagine growths are all potentially benign "(21). This might be taken to imply a series of double meanings. For one, it almost sarcastically humours the notion that the nuclear power plant, herbicide factories, even capitalism itself,

are potentially benign growths as we, “the public”, in the Sleeping Islands are confidently assured. The growth of the nuclear power plant extension is constructed as benign by the government who wants to appease the protesters. However, unfolding events in the novel undermine this statement revealing the irony at play—the nuclear power plant leaks radiation which is certainly not benign. But perhaps it *could have* (“potentially”) been benign, *if only* these things had not happened—revealing the partial truths disseminated by power: that is, environmental exploitation could be benign, if only it really did correspond to certain ideals which were not rudely interrupted by reality.

Further, there is a less ironic reading that could be taken as a comment on the possibilities of peaceful co-existence. The violence of the plants *only* comes about due to the combined nuclear waste and activist’s anger towards environmental destruction. The plants and activists only become not-benign at the point when Omelette, her music, George and later help from their friends, join forces and activate these benign growths. The monster plants which ingest some of the laboratory workers and scientists are not inevitable, and there is the possibility of peaceful co-existence in the absence of violent human activity. Yet, at the same time, recalling the double-meaning of “potentially benign”, the potential and instability of the collective (Latour, *Politics* 80), there is also the possibility of the nonhuman being not benign—as Latour puts it, “no one knows what an environment can do” (80). The word “potentially”, implies that there is always more than one way things can pan out, and this holds a kind of utopian ambiguity. As feminist utopian author Joanna Russ has said (in Moylan): every action or event always holds the possibilities of multiple kinds of futures (*Demand* 62). Taken together, we might read in these novels the suggestion that utopianism is not benign.

This is a more nuanced and ambiguous view of growth than either the usual capitalist or environmentalist stance, gesturing towards some of the growth related arguments that seem to sometimes hamstring environmentalists. That is, environmentalist opposition to capitalist growth on a finite planet, and capitalist equations of 'growth' with 'good' produces contradictory associations with the notion of growth as it relates to ecology. In a sense, the novel critiques the destructive nature of growth itself, an exploration of its inherent 'good' or 'bad'. These contradictions are implied in the title, *The Limits of Green*, where the word 'limits' seems to relate to strands of environmentalist theory which hold to the idea that growth and resources are finite. Yet at the same time, as the novel explores, plant growth seems to be infinite and the metaphor of growth can be used in environmentalist discourse to mean something positive. It can also be taken as a fear about plant agency, and in particular the anxiety about the reproductive power of women's bodies which is likened to a fear of uncontrollable nature and growth. It calls forth all kinds of growths and 'meanings' for the idea of growth: weeds, capitalism, foetuses, tumours, growth that creates both life and death, growth that both destroys and creates.

The destruction of authoritative figures and buildings, symbolising empire or a particular kind of advanced civilization, feature in McAlpine's novels as capable of bringing about a new kind of world. For example in *Running* it is only through violent resistance to the agents of the RUSA state that the beach builders prevent the incitement of nuclear warfare, and a supernatural apocalyptic event that brings about a new kind of world (223). Like in *Woman*, McAlpine leaves ambiguous whether this is a psychological experience or event which actually occurs, as it is described almost entirely from Dorothy's perspective. She experiences it physically: hit by "painful impulses" (224), but her experience is also a transformation of, or coming-to-consciousness of the violent history of colonization. She

witnesses historical events played out, and the appearance of figures such as “a woman of scraped green-ice” (pounamu), “a thicket of blackened gorse” (symbolising colonisation and deforestation), “bodies in combat, phosphorescent sweat, spearing, clubbing, gouging; blood vessels trailing from wet lips; muskets shattering morning bodies; carved and feathered spears pressing on skin and plunging through; tomahawks crunching, adzes thudding” (224).

Yet in witnessing this warfare incited by European invasion and claiming of Māori land, the beach-builders are supposedly not “taking a moral position. On the contrary, we were part of all parts of this world” experiencing being a bystander, a victim and a killer over and over (*Running* 225): “we were in it, right inside it, ripping out our own eyeballs, cleaving our own skulls, shuddering with the static of dislocated emotion” (225). The implication perhaps being that Dorothy is of both Māori and Pakeha descent (as is implied elsewhere in the novel: 102), and therefore carries the pain of being both victim and oppressor, and this pain resonates through many generations. As “part of all parts of this world” (225) implies a kind of raised consciousness of ‘wholeness’ or awareness of ‘everything that is’. In keeping with McAlpine’s interest in sound and music, this event or coming-to-consciousness is also experienced in sonic form such as a plane taking off, mangroves ‘thrumming’, a “tragic noise kept recurring, acute as a whalesong” and harmonics resonating in “a sky-high storm” (225). Dramatically, “mostly it was screams and battle cries and a roaring from below the earth as palpable shadows crammed tightly on to that one peninsula, and rushed and killed and died and made an airless, doorless stairwell which hauled us down and down and down into clattering chaos” (225) and it is as if they are experiencing a “shared a single epileptic fit” or “a great fire or an earthquake” (225). Again, McAlpine’s interest in sound as visceral features large.

That this cataclysmic event comes to pass following the beach builder's killing of a RUSAn general finds affinity with a number of other critical feminist utopias or utopian works which depict violent resistance to power, notably *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Commentary surrounding this has been both critical and hopeful. On the one hand it signifies the possibility of resistance, and on the other it is a horrific act which seems problematic to include in visions of feminism and utopianism. Discussions on violence in relation to resistance are divisive. On the one hand, power is not necessarily responsive to non-violent action. On the other, violence represents a profound disconnection of means and ends if the intention is to bring about a more harmonious and emancipatory state of affairs. However, both Piercy and McAlpine are ambiguous about the results of violence. In *Woman* it is implied that Connie's murders do not lead to her release but likely her further incarceration in the psychiatric hospital. In McAlpine's novels there are happier endings, but these are still left open-ended and we are not left with any certainty regarding the status of RUSA and nuclear war. In both cases it is more about the *act* of resistance itself rather than its effects.

The ending of *Limits* depicts a messy, open-ended and potentially destructive situation which represents utopianism and radical change as never tidy and contained. The great rainbow

bucked and snapped. Colours peeled off in fractions of tones and curled back on themselves in ringlets. They fell to the earth like vivid wood shavings...Andrea had to pull them off like ribbons, and yet they were nothing but light, benevolently concentrated. She walked through the tangled spectrum, unravelling tendrils of blue, violet, orange, pink, brushing them off, laughing. At last she extricated herself and

was standing beside the others, stained all over in colourful blotches. (McAlpine, *Limits* 179-180).

This might be read as an aestheticisation of the activist or anarchist process of temporary mutual aid, a coming together for specific purposes and then falling apart again, with no need for ongoing or forced unity. The image of a rainbow bucking and snapping might also be read as the tension and fragmentation of diverse social groupings and movements (which will be further discussed in Part Three). Images of torn pieces of rainbow, as well as the implication that several buildings and power plants have been destroyed, paints a picture of a new world growing in the rubble of the old. Resistance growing from waste is a reoccurring theme in both novels: nuclear waste and the beach built out of dead sticks in particular. The concept of 'waste', like 'non', is both surplus to requirements, but also deficient and lacking.

Yet what is perhaps most interesting about this kind of 'destruction' is that McAlpine uses it to suggest nonhuman agency and creative or regenerative potential. For example the bluff on which the General's bomb shelter resort was perched collapses in the earthquake, taking with it his building. While Fern is astounded that the bluff has disappeared, Dorothy points out "that wasn't strictly accurate. It was still somewhere, but in a different form" (231). Nature can seem random and unpredictable ('no one knows what an environment can do', Latour, *Politics* 80), and things are always assembling and reassembling (Latour, Bennett). At the end of the novel, the Old Woman Bluff, the great works of art, the buildings, have all fragmented and reassembled in different forms. The rubble of the art and buildings is reassembled, via the beach-building team, into another form: the dunes of the beach itself, a structure that will respond to the threat of erosion by rising tides.

This destruction and reassembling can also be applied to reading culture. After the apocalyptic event which destroys the General's resort and art gallery, the art gallery director and her staff "combed through the rubble, the new lowlands, searching for any least scrap of the lost works of art" in the "clutter of concrete and steel and wood" but "all that was found was the head of the spear (broken), and bits of framing" (McAlpine, *Running* 239). Combing through the rubble for lost works of famous art (which included Renoir, Monet and also some stolen Māori art) seems reminiscent of other commentary on postmodernism and 'trash' appearing in scenes or settings of waste of a fallen civilization such as in Philip K Dick's *Do Android's Dream of Electric Sheep?* Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Kushner's *Angel's in America*. This scene might be read as commentary on the postmodern condition; the end of 'grand narratives', the fracturing and rupturing of art into small pieces, through which we are now sifting for great lost works. The implication is that the fall of civilization, or of art, of utopianism, or modernism, has already happened and this is the condition of life in postmodern culture devoid of any 'greats' whether this be artists, works, political schemes or utopias.

Unable to source anything 'whole' from the rubble, the beach builders in *Running* instead collect the rubble to use for rebuilding the beach dunes. Quite symbolically, the search for wholeness (and art/culture) is abandoned in favour of a return to the material. The narrator is jubilant about having the "first pick of the flotsam and jetsam...We began accumulating building materials: beams of wood, and amazingly, sections of glass" (239). No longer the cultural products they were before, the rubble is now returned to the material of which it is made: wood, steel, concrete and glass. Importantly, these become part of the beach building--a turn away from the cultural and towards the material and *environmental*.

This in turn can be read as a fictional and symbolic depiction of the utopianism of postmodern theory as it turns to the particular and the material.

Postmodern culture seems both celebratory of, and repulsed by, its own 'surplus' and 'waste'. High productivity and the endless production of goods and popular culture clashes with the rise of minimalism, political austerity, lean culture and a fascination with efficiency. It seems significant that it is also through waste that environmentalist discourse makes its gains in this cultural climate. Yet perhaps more positive (postmodern) readings of waste and rubble can enliven us to the utopian potentials of what is thrown away, what is refuse, what is *refused*. Materially, in that what Bennett writes about the vitality of matter (explained in the following chapter), and metaphorically in that taking this as a metaphor for the waste of postmodernism, its fragmentariness, might help to think about these fragments of utopian visions and social movements and identities in ways which are more useful for utopianism. The postmodern playing with, worrying, wearing down, dissecting, deconstructing of totalities is an act itself, but also an act that makes compost to nurture the seeds of something else.

As I argued in the previous chapter, writing, and reading, are acts and not simply representations. McAlpine creates spaces (imaginary although they are) in which global power can be contested, spaces where particularities of (fictional and fantastical) women's lives, embodiment and actions meet power, what Guattari terms 'discrete points' (Fournier 207). This space is utopian and imaginary, invigorating the idea of utopianism as a space of resistance and *struggle* over 'how we should live', rather than a space where ideals are depicted. Fictional depictions such as McAlpine's, can enliven the world to the reader, unsettle what we take for granted as reality, and therefore make possible other ways of living, being and feeling. In keeping with eco-political, anarchist and feminist concerns these

texts can be read as invitations to revalue sound, nonhuman nature, female embodiment and the constitution of human relationships as in flux, and based on context and shared projects rather than abstract or total structures. These ways of thinking, being and moving through the world might be read as facilitating feminist, anarchist and environmentalist ways of living and relating: ways which might be read as immanent. Amongst the dystopianism of the RUSA-dominated world, there is the sense that without violence, state authority, domination and toxic masculinity, utopia is already here.

Chapter Eight: Agency and the Utopianism of Nonhuman Nature: Plant Gang and McAlpine's Assemblages

To the extent that utopianism refers to unfolding process, action, affect, alterity the non or 'not yet' and includes nonhuman nature, as I have been arguing, the centrality of human agency or intention is brought into question. In the previous two chapters I have been concerned with the problematisation or de-centering of human agency in relation to utopianism and thinking or imagining differently. The implication is, contrary to Part One, that it may be very difficult to 'intentionally' think, imagine or discover an 'authentic' truth or alterity. I have argued that both theorising and knowledge creation are forms of 'implicit' utopianisms, and I also turned to materialist theories regarding the nonhuman environment (Chapter Six). In this chapter I seek to explore nonhuman nature and nonhuman agency as relevant for utopianism. This is two-fold. Utopian in the sense of practical transformation of the world can mean feminist and anarchist resistance to state-power which includes nonhuman nature, specifically plants, not just as objects but as collaborators in acts of feminist and anarchist resistance. This relates to a wider discussion about inclusion of the nonhuman, and ecology in particular as pertinent to anarchist and feminist praxis. This is, however, still a very human-centric view. In the second part of this chapter, I try to counter this by centering the nonhuman and explore how we might understand nonhuman nature in relation to critical utopianism, in particular in relation to alterity, otherness and always unfolding action or 'not-yets'.

This chapter brings together theories relating to critical feminist utopianism, utopian impulses and nonhuman agency. Critical utopias recreate utopianism as imperfect, never complete, and always unfolding through action (Moylan, *Demand* 39). As Bloch theorises, utopianism is not transcendent but *immanent* and utopian impulses are everywhere and

embedded in present yearnings for what is “not-yet”, including what is ‘not-yet conscious’ (42-45). Feminist utopian theorists and writers have extended this ‘not yet conscious’ to suggest that utopianism functions to ‘transform consciousness’ (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 229) and this is something I want to suggest might be a function of the texts and theories described in this chapter. That we are human and nonhuman at once, and that we are of course always already entangled with nonhuman nature is reason enough to include it in utopian discussions and visions. Many utopian and eco-topian depictions of nature in literary works do this already, although often these reinforce constructions of nature as either harmonious and pristine, or something inert and unruly to be controlled (Garforth, “Ideal Nature” 6). More than simply ‘including’, I want to argue that humans can take some cues from nonhuman nature. That is, I am seeking to think about utopianism in relation to nonhuman nature which challenges romanticised and human-centric versions by taking into account two bodies of critical work: critical utopianism (Moylan, Sargisson, Le Guin, Piercy) and critical ecology or ecocritique (Morton, Bennett, Latour).

I explore these ideas through a brief analysis of material from the blog of the art-gardening group, “Plant Gang” of Christchurch, New Zealand, whose work was catalysed by the 2010-2011 Canterbury Earthquake Sequence, as well as revisiting McAlpine’s novels *The Limits of Green* (1985) and *Running Away from Home* (1987). Plant Gang’s mission is to bring about everyday awareness and appreciation of wild plant life, protecting and encouraging wild growth in ways which do not always easily align with government and corporate-lead developments. In this way Plant Gang’s work can be read as aligning with a number of themes of previous chapters such as anarchism, immanence, social and cultural change, agency, growth, disruption and fracture. While nonhuman nature is portrayed as unpredictable and disruptive, unlike many speculative and apocalyptic depictions of

nonhuman threats to civilisation, these (con)texts refuse a tired narrative of collapse and might be better read for the hopeful and alternative worlds and ways of being suggested amongst environmental turmoil.

Reading nature in relation to critical utopianism is in opposition to constructing nature as pristine, harmonious or perfect, as the term utopian may tend to imply. Rather, in this chapter I explore a reading of nature as utopian for its otherness and disruptive capabilities. By reading depictions of nonhuman nature through critical utopianism and theories which emphasise nonhuman agency it might be possible to arrive at a notion of a utopian nature which deviates from what Lisa Garforth refers to as the “twin tropes of catastrophe and ecotopia” (Garforth, “Ideal nature” 6). Following theorists such as Latour, Bennett, Morton and interpretations of Deleuze, I approach depictions of nature through perspectives which construct nonhumans as agentic and unpredictable and constituted by assemblages. Here, I use these ideas in a very broad sense, taking some basic concepts about nonhuman nature as agentic and the tendency for things to interact to create action. Nonhuman nature can be read or understood as having agency, meaning that humans and nonhumans alike are seen as “actants” which affect other actants. An alternative to pondering ideas such as intention or purpose, this perspective draws attention to effects and actions which happen as a result of multiple human and nonhuman actants interacting as part of a ‘collective’ (Latour, *Politics* 80). For Jane Bennett, nonhuman actants possess what she terms ‘thing-power’ which is attained by things or actants coming together and forming what Bennett and Deleuze both call assemblages. It is this combination of agency and collectivity that creates action which is never complete.

As Timothy Morton puts it beings are “nothing but relationality” and “co-existence” which is “always to come” (Morton, “Queer Ecology” 277). The unpredictability *and* the collectivity of human and nonhuman collectives and assemblages is what demands attention be paid to the nonhuman (Latour, “Politics” 80). For Deleuze and Spinoza, “bodies have a propensity to form collectivities” (Bennett, “Steps” 349). According to Deleuzian views of matter and organisms, all bodies exist in “a kind of chaotic network of habitual and non-habitual connections, always in flux, always reassembling in different ways” and never in a stable state of ‘being’, but rather constantly becoming (Potts 19). Such a view also blurs the boundaries between human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate. As authors like Kafka, theorists like Deleuze, and even scientists like Vernadsky have shown, the line between the inanimate and the animate is permeable, “all things, to some degree or other, live on both sides” (Bennett, “Steps” 352). The sense of fragmentation, and not-yet, *and* tendency towards collectivity, is what I want to draw from the examples I’ll look at.

Drawing on Latour, Jane Bennett posits matter as vibrant, emphasising a kind of nonhuman agency, or ‘thing power’. Instead of organising the world into two categories according to a life/matter binary, “all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations” forming temporary assemblages, rather than coherent and always-stable and easily individualised ‘organisms’ or objects (Bennett, “Enchanted” 13). What Bennett calls “thing-power”, inspired by Thoreau, reveals that “there is an existence peculiar to a thing that is irreducible to the thing’s imbrication with human subjectivity. It is due to this otherness or wildness, says Thoreau, that things have the power to addle and rearrange thoughts and perceptions” (Bennett, “Steps” 348). Thing-power is a function of a grouping: a thing’s power comes from “its operating *in conjunction* with other things” and it is, as a kind of agency, “the property of an assemblage” (354). Bennett finds that each

object, in say, a pile of rubbish, can be seen both as individuated and as in a relationship with all the others and it is here that thing-power can be identified. Piles of waste, rubble or rubbish are assemblages of objects which can be seen as either/or/both rubbish or “thing” and Bennett experiences this “shimmy back and forth between trash and thing” where ‘thing’ refers to “stuff that commands attention as vital and alive in its own right” (350). This requires “openness to nonhuman forms of vitality and agency” (362).

Let loose from their usual appearance within the confines of capitalist production and presentation (in shops, warehouses, factories and so on) objects appear more vividly as “things” or “as entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics” (351). Such a way of looking invites in surprise at what we see as thing power has “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (351). The rubble after destruction or disaster, or the ‘pieces’ of art, might be viewed as examples. Bennett’s analysis of something as mundane as a pile of rubbish, “the glove, the rat, the bottle cap—a singularity brought to light by the contingency of their co-presence, by the specific assemblages they formed” (350). Thing-power materialism

figures materiality as a protean flow of matter-energy and figures the thing as a relatively composed form of that flow. It hazards an account of materiality even though materiality is both too alien and too close for humans to see clearly. It seeks to promote acknowledgement, respect, and sometimes fear of the materiality of the thing and to articulate ways in which human being and thinghood overlap. It emphasises those occasions in ordinary life when the us and the it slipslide into each other, for one moral of this materialist tale is that we are also nonhuman and that things too are vital players in the world. Like Thoreau, I hope to enhance my

receptivity to thing-power by writing about it, by giving an account of the thingness of things that might enable me to feel it more intensely. I pursue this project in the hope of fostering greater recognition of the agential powers of natural and artificial things, greater awareness of the dense web of their connections with each other and with human bodies, and, finally, a more cautious, intelligent approach to our interventions in that ecology. (349).

That materiality is both “too alien and too close” implies a certain uncanniness relevant to utopianism; utopias being both estranged and reflections of the present in a way which also meets the definition of the uncanny (Moylan, *Demand* 34). As Morton writes, “our own body is one of the uncanniest phenomena we could ever encounter. What is closest to home is also the strangest” (Morton, *Ecology* 40). This interesting relationship between estrangement and proximity will be further explored in the final chapter of this section. For now, it is worth noting that the strange-yet-familiar denotes how one can relate to ‘the other’, that the nonhuman is at once ‘us and not us’ (Morton, “Queer Ecology” 277). This is both mundane, a part of ordinary everyday life, and also quite remarkable. Coming-to-consciousness about ‘things’ can be quite astounding, can induce wonder and even empathy as I argued in “theorising” (Bennett, “Enchanted” 13; McManus). Relatedly, Bennett responds to this sense of wonder, and seeks to increase it through the act of *writing* and theorising and she connects this to the possibility of other kinds of action in the world on a larger scale, hoping that fostering such ways of relating to ecology might result in more mutualistic and delicate ways of living in and with the nonhuman environment.

Agency

The Limits of Green

McAlpine's *The Limits of Green* (1985) can be read as exploring, or implying instances of thing power, plant agency and plant animatism. Namely, the novel's depictions of activists attempting to resist and bring about a new world by collaborating with plants, specifically Omelette's musical compositions which promote rapid growth in plants, which then destroy the nuclear power station. The plants are actively destructive in this operation and plant action is foregrounded in the text. For example the nuclear power plant ends up "crumbling in the grip of tree roots from below and creepers over the top" (123) leading to its implosion. One reading of this is escapist 'fantasy', however another is that it is a depiction of plant *agency*. The plants are actants in a collective or assemblage with human activists and against the usual construction of humans as agentic and plants as passive, both humans and plants are depicted as actants, coming together to collectively produce action which has a range of political, physical and super-natural effects. The way McAlpine describes this, is that it just *happens*-- there is no description of human or plant 'thinking', no 'plan', 'intention' or prediction of what will happen. The action of plants, humans and music is laid out by depicting the effects of the action. This is in keeping with previously described theorists who trouble or reject ideas of humanistic or mind-centric intention agency, and instead emphasise effects which all actants have in the world (Latour, Bennett).

One such effect of this collaborative action is the bringing into being of new (mutant) plant life-forms which occurs as an effect of the nuclear waste and, presumably, Omelette's magical music. Making even more obvious the animate in plants, McAlpine depicts the monster plants as animal-like life forms. The monster plants are "possessed of a rudimentary defensive intelligence" (196) and they actively resist human approach when "two local laboratory workers were grasped by the vines and fully absorbed through the

skin. A RUSA scientists was pulled into the centre of the growth and presumably met a similar fate. An attempt to detach a piece of the vegetation with a laser beam caused grave injury to the operator.” (191). This depiction hints towards understandings of all matter as having agency (Bennett, “Steps” 353) as opposed to the implication that agency and consequence is specific to humanity.

This presents a view of nature which is not passive and simply ‘being’ damaged, but is actively reacting in ways not predicted by or accounted for by human authorities. The trees “capitalise on the radioactive waste” by “absorbing radioactivity and converting it into harmless shock waves...[to use for] mysterious purposes” (McAlpine, *Limits* 92). Again, the trees are depicted as acting, having agency rather than passively being damaged. Further, they are depicted as acting *with* these unnatural or super-natural elements—the radioactive waste, and the fantastical music. However, the suggestion is not simply that a clean, green nature will salvage the earth from human-made problems like waste (or perhaps global warming). Nature is not associated with domesticity and gentleness, but nor is it associated with wilderness and pristineness, because it is ‘contaminated’ by the nuclear waste, and collaborates with humans (Omelette and George). The implication is that nonhuman nature is at once ‘us and not-us’ (Morton, “Queer Ecology” 277): both natural and cultural.

The trees form an assemblage with the nuclear waste creating an unstable and unpredictable situation which has both destructive and utopian effects and “brings a new world sprouting into life” (180). It is, in this sense, an ambiguously or critically utopian scenario. Perhaps it might be called a utopianistic assemblage: an imagining of the ways in which things could combine in not-yet realisable ways which would create action that is not-yet, but could be, action including dreaming and the transformation of consciousness. This is similar to what Bennett writes about the mysterious, spontaneous and miraculous

combining of disparate elements. It is this coming together of humans, music, plants and nuclear waste that gives them their vitality, and this might be read in conjunction with Bennett's version of thing-power or assemblage. That is, McAlpine's utopian fictionalisation of assemblages is an act of estrangement, characteristic of the utopian genre, which in fact reflects present realities. This fictional extrapolation or estranging view of assemblage depicts actants coming together in ways not-yet realisable, but also takes us closer to a reality of nonhuman agency if read in a particular way. In "reality" things really do combine and create action in surprising and disruptive ways. As Latour says: "no one knows what an environment can do" (Latour, *Politics* 80). There is arguably something both ominous and hopeful in this kind of sentiment in its leaning towards alterity and otherness, a future not predetermined.

Plant Gang

Plant Gang was a response to the Canterbury Earthquake Sequence through 2010-2011, and the human and nonhuman effects of its aftermath. In this sense it is an effect of both a disruptive natural event (earthquakes) and the bureaucracy and power involved in the aftermath and rebuilding of the city. Following the earthquakes in Christchurch over 1300 buildings were demolished around the central city leaving an almost "blank slate", a chance to rebuild the city in a totally different way- an almost utopian opportunity. However, following the earthquakes two quite different forces were apparent. On the one hand, despite initial enthusiasm about consulting with the public (such as the *Share an Idea* project, Vallance n.p), perhaps unsurprisingly, central government, property owners and developers held political and economic sway over the city and dictated where the opportunities fell (Swaffield 15). Many residents have felt the results have been

disappointing: the rebuild has been slow, and has arguably not really catered to the people. This coincided with the de-democratization of the regional council, Environment Canterbury, severely limiting the ability of the public to engage with environmental and regional resource issues, concentrating the power with the government commissioners who appeared to represent farming and business interests (Swaffield 18).

However there was also resistance to authoritative power structures. The aftermath also brought a flurry of community activity which grew into projects which reclaimed 'empty' demolition sites of rubble as *public* space, transforming them into art installations, gardens, places for people to gather, share food, exchange books, fix bikes and even dance. This is consistent with Rebecca Solnit's analysis of disaster contexts as times of creativity, community solidarity and connection, and even what could be described as temporary utopian communities which often arise (in Graeber, *Direct Action*, 530). As Graeber also notes, when the tools of the bureaucratic state are, even temporarily nullified or suspended, as they can be in the initial phase following a natural disaster, this has the effect of "throwing horizons of possibility wide open" (530). The possibilities which become apparent following such rupture perhaps accounts for why "revolutionary moments always seem to be followed by an outpouring of creativity-social, artistic, and intellectual" (530). The implication, according to Graeber, is that this creativity and imagination is always already there, only it is generally repressed by state and bureaucratic apparatus.

This increase in creative activity has been noted in relation to post-disaster contexts such as Christchurch (Cameron et al. 344). Plant Gang appeared amongst this context of post-disaster bureaucracy and the throwing open horizons of possibility, the dual forces of increased community activity where the usual institutions had failed or were suspended. Yet these 'utopian actions' were small and nuanced, and, like many utopian impulses, difficult

to notice. An art-gardening group, Plant Gang's project involved planting and facilitating plant growth in vacant demolition sites and also running a blog to encourage and educate about foraging and rewilding. These actions are oriented towards raising awareness of wild plant life and showing how so-called 'damaged' and 'empty' spaces with 'weeds' can be seen, and inhabited, *otherwise*. Plant Gang's mission is to bring about everyday awareness and appreciation of wild plant life, protecting and encouraging wild growth in ways which deviate from government and corporate-lead developments. In this sense, Plant Gang attempts to bring into being a new kind of ecologically oriented city, conveying a kind of utopian impulse.

For example, on their blog the founder says

I have chosen to do this work because it is what I want to see in the city. I want my own life and the life of this city to be truly connected to the environment, to be grounded, natural, organic, sensitive, giving and cyclic. Plants are this connection, they connect us to the ground, the sky, they connect us to ages old, to ourselves, to our surroundings, to organisms, both living and dead.

This might be read as a utopian impulse for a different kind of city, a yearning for a way of urban living as part of an ecosystem which is not nostalgia for a return to a romanticised pristine nature, but one which is *both* natural and cultural in ways not repressive of nonhuman nature. In this sense, it is a yearning for alternative approaches to living practically with, alongside and in nonhuman nature, but also for discursive or philosophical alternatives for how nonhuman nature is perceived. Additionally, there is a kind of yearning

towards collectivity, which could perhaps be described in terms of an *assemblage* of plants, ground, sky, history, humans. This invokes an acknowledgement of humans *as* or *in* nature within what is variously conceptualised as a web, chain or rhizome of interconnection.

This speaks again to agency of nonhumans and the ways in which humans and nonhumans collaborate to create action. Like in McAlpine's novel, *Plant Gang* also describes plants as "participants" which are both resisting and being oppressed by human authority and property boundaries. To *Plant Gang* "vacant lots are not seen as demolition sites, but space for potential and growth, weeds are not seen as weeds, but as participants in our environment, beneficial to ourselves, animals, birds, the air and the soil" ("Artist Profile"). This challenges anthropocentric views of urban areas and provides an alternative: plants are participants and crucial actants in a larger ecosystem, and 'empty' spaces are potential homes for plants and spaces of plant agency. Their work can be seen as asserting "direct action" whereby people directly act in their environment and community without going through official authorities. It is acting as if one is already free, as if state does not exist, in order to bring about the change one wants to see (Graeber, *Direct Action*). PG projects can also be viewed as acts of resistance which link art, resistance, plants and utopianism.

Collaboration and Direct Action

At this point I would like to take a moment to consider the practice and depiction of direct action. This could have been included in many other chapters, such as the chapter on anarchism or the previous chapter on McAlpine's novels. By including it here as part of a discussion of 'reconstructing' agency, which includes both human and nonhuman agency I mean to imply that human agency always already occurs in a nonhuman context, or is

inseparable from the nonhuman. As I argued in Chapter Seven, McAlpine's exploration of sound, music and plants can be read as a way of imagining how humans can encounter nonhuman nature in ways less objectifying, thus opening possibilities for how nonhuman nature can *affect* the human which in the novel allows for collaborative resistance which can be read as anarchist. Omelette laments that "you can't win. There's always another muck-up, another trick. You can't win anything but a skirmish that is small, local and temporary" (McAlpine, *Limits* 89). This is immensely frustrating when the hope is to 'confront power once and for all', yet McAlpine's presentation of 'successes' as small, local and temporary aligns with anarchist, grassroots activists, feminist views of direct action. According to these perspectives, power is contextual, local and specific, and resistance and utopianism must be continuous—there is no once and for all solution.

As I argued in the previous chapter, utopia or utopianism is not depicted as something which just happens at the end of the novel, nor as a concrete and complete 'place' or society throughout these novels. It is elusively, only within the process of the narrative, the process of resistance itself. Importantly, this means that what I am referring to as 'utopianism' in McAlpine's novels and Plant Gang's work, is only that which exists in temporary actions, as opposed to a form of utopianism as a grand scheme or ultimate plan for a society. Contrary to the traditional view of utopianism (which causes much anxiety about perfection, rules and totality), in *Limits* and *Running* the characters do not mill around worrying about the optimal way for humans to live or the 'best' possible future. Rather, the turn to action implies that utopianism consists of getting on with *doing*. There is hardly any 'thinking' of any individual character in McAlpine's novels, for example. The implication is that the way through is in the action; the utopia is in the action—not a far off future; the

ends and the means are the same. So too, utopian fictions and theorisings can be seen as such acts.

In McAlpine's *Running*, direct action, and the immediate enactment of utopian desires for change, are depicted as both emergent and urgent alternatives to the status-quo. When Fern moves in with Hattie she finds an alternative to her previous life in a capitalist economic structure in which she sells her labour to buy property, a thoroughly alienating process. With Hattie, Fern finds a different way of living and of doing work forming a kind of collective or communal living arrangement with Orlando, Hattie, Doug and his three horse companions, whose lives for a time revolve around working to save the beach which is eroding as "the tide came in further each year" (*Running* 142). This new way of life can be read as utopian, again the utopianism occurring in the living itself, as opposed to any kind of plan or indication of utopianism from the outset.

The work is experimental, clumsy and mostly occurs without instruction or leadership. Yet because it is seen as important, perhaps 'meaningful', and a form of non-alienated labour, much is achieved within a time-scale free from a productivist discourse. This way of working differs markedly from Fern's office job, labour done for bureaucracy or profit. Rather, "speed was not an issue on the beach, of course...a careful walking pace was ideal for the work" and the work is inclusive and involves whatever and whoever is at hand. The work is inclusive of nonhumans such as the beach-building materials and Doug's horses who, with Doug, create a rather unwieldy assemblage which is not simple or efficient but "somehow they worked it out together, although it took time...." (151). Working in this kind of unconventional and 'Do-it-Yourself' manner, and with whoever and whatever is in close proximity, means that "so much of the work consisted of looking, thinking, trying again and changing a plan in the middle" (155) and the narrator comments that "luckily she was not a

perfectionist” (155). This might be taken more metaphorically as a deviation from the link between utopianism and perfection. For the group, living and working together is not preceded by any model or plan, but involves an acceptance of trying, and trying again, and an openness to change in a way which is consistent with feminist and critical utopianism.

Their work can also be read as horizontal and non-hierarchical with decisions occurring through methods of consensus-based decision making. Alarmed by the erosion of the beach and familiar with its effects elsewhere, Orlando holds a meeting for local residents in which he shares photos of beach restoration efforts occurring in a nearby region. He explains to the gathering “the function of driftwood on the beach: it meshed together to form the basis of dunes, it held windblown sand and tide-borne sand, and provided nutrients for the grasses. He showed them what they knew was a possible future truth for them: bare boulders, water turbulently colliding with them, and not a grain of sand in sight” (143). Orlando has no authority, “they didn’t have a chairman and Orlando refrained from adopting that role” (144), nor does he seem to have expertise or scientific vocabulary, rather he presents simple pictures, draws on experience from another nearby region, and reiterates what “they knew was a possible future” already. After some resistance and discussion, the people of the area collectively reach consensus to cooperate with Orlando’s plan. This process of community discussion can be read as an alternative to the ways in which decisions and knowledge are distributed in hierarchical societies and instead presents a depiction of how action can be facilitated less hierarchically.

For Plant Gang direct action involves ongoing co-operation and negotiation between humans and nonhumans, and often outside of official government or corporate power. A clear example of how Plant Gang clashes with the capitalist order, is in their contesting of space with the council and car parking corporations. In an interview, Plant Gang’s

spokesperson, Worsnop, is openly critical of the control of space by central government, big businesses, and the Christchurch City Council (CCC). She discusses what many would agree to be a particularly noxious example in Christchurch--Wilson's Parking Corporation.

Worsnop laments that

the car parking thing is so painful...I have planted so many plants in places that six weeks later become car parks. Oh my god. These plants are for the bees it's not just, you know, me doing something funny...This is actually important. (Plant Gang Blog, 2013-2017)

In ways which might be likened to the parasitic, Wilson's Parking has claimed 'empty' lots and demolition sites extracting rent from people to park their cars. Worsnop's criticism coheres with some of the eco-centric views already discussed in this section which hold nonhuman life to be valuable in itself and, perhaps more than this, valuable in that it is part of a series of interconnections where, as ecologists well know, change of one organism or ecosystem affects others. In a sense, life itself *is* these interconnections. Worsnop and Plant Gang wish to act in order to facilitate the development and continuation of particular ecosystems, in this case for bees which are essential for pollination and the continuation of plant, and thus human, existence. This work is undermined by a company whose only interest is making short-term profit through rent extraction, to do which the piece of land must be kept empty of other human or ecological activity. Worsnop is fully aware of the ways her work is perceived as "something funny", some kind of eccentric creative work and therefore unimportant, which starkly contrasts with Wilsons which is seen as a legitimate form of 'work' deserving of large monetary reward.

There are few areas in modern cities where space is not owned and controlled by businesses and/or the state. This serves to make discussion, community building and autonomy more difficult. On their tumblr blog, Plant Gang is critical of the ways in which those with more powerful control space and are open about their opposition to this. They write that

in opposition to the 'golf course green' look the powers at be are cultivating on our residential redzone, REWILDING THE REDZONE promotes and plants a biologically diverse and beneficial array of flowers, herbs, nutrient fixers, bee food, trees, green mulches and more. The disuse of petrochemically derived herbicides, pesticides, fungicides and fertilizers is fundamental to this campaign. ("Rewilding the Redzone", Plant Gang Blog, 2013-2017).

"Rewilding", a term used by anarcho-primitivists, refers to learning and reclaiming skills for sustainable co-existence such as foraging for food, finding shelter and healing with materials found naturally in the bioregion (Green Anarchist Collective, "What" 6). In this case it is also a form of direct action in which the focus is on acting without any reference to a bureaucratic structure, rather than on any attempt to reform or persuade the council, government or public. Rewilding involves imparting knowledge and skills about food gathering and medicine so that people might begin to regain some independence from supermarkets and the medical model, in other words, our heavy reliance on capitalist and state structures, alienating institutions, for our survival. For example, a section on Plant Gang's blog entitled "Botanical Appreciation Project" pictures photos of pressed plants common in Christchurch city and their edible, medicinal and ecological uses are listed.

The immanence of plant agency is also conveyed through the blog's photos of small areas around the city temporarily untouched by humans where plant growth is flourishing, carving out its own areas for temporary autonomy. What this further indicates, is that without constant and violent repression by humans plants reclaim areas otherwise empty of flora. Emphasising the very presence of these unseemly plants in such contexts undermines human control and implies that the 'default' absence of plants in urban spaces is not inevitable or natural, or the result of historical human activity, but rather requires *ongoing* violent action towards certain plant species. Space is constantly monopolised, owned and guarded by the powerful yet plants are always already challenging this domination. The point is, power and bureaucracy is *ongoing* and needs to constantly maintain or defend itself. When, as Graeber implies, these oppressive actions are interrupted or suspended, as in the aftermath of a natural disaster, creativity and growth (human and nonhuman alike) is unleashed (Graeber, *Direct Action* 530). It was there all along.

A Lack of End-point

Direct action and grassroots action may not necessarily have clearly defined utopian end-points or unified goals, or rather, goals and trajectories may not be expressible through capitalist or bureaucratic language and understandings of worth. Again, Plant Gang's struggle over space that continues becoming car parks is exemplary of this point. Plant Gang say they have "planted so many plants in places that six weeks later become car parks... These plants are for the bees ...This is actually important." Bees and plants, of course, form all sorts of assemblages which create the action absolutely essential for the continuation of

human and nonhuman life alike --life itself arises from these interconnections. However, there is no end point, and no calculable gain as there is for Wilson's Parking. This lack of end-point, seems to be something of a problem, particularly because authorities such as the Christchurch city council seem to prefer full and complete, tidy visions with an end-point rather than messy and open-ended alternatives.

Similarly, Worsnop notes, the Christchurch City Council is not particularly sympathetic towards messy gardens in the process of 'becoming'. Worsnop notes that in an empty space left alone a forest will eventually form "with different strata and different plants occupying different spaces" and this might be perceived as a kind of 'natural order', rather than a chaotic mess requiring human correction. The marginality of her projects prevent this from happening:

It's something that's quite difficult for me at the moment because I want to you know plant some gardens that are going to stick around. I'm not sure what kind of design to make it, because I have to present this whole concept and design. But, it's [sic] just doesn't seem natural and it doesn't seem right. I think that say if I go and talk to the council I feel as though I wouldn't be given the time and space to let the garden occur naturally. It feels like I'd just have one day just to be able to chuck it all in there. There's this garden at C1² that Sam from C1 uses it, but every once in a while when the garden is not looking as good—this is an edible garden—the council go and rip the plants out and just chuck them out. That's not how plants exist. That's not how gardens exist. Gardens go through some sort of living, dying and going to

² A café in central Christchurch

seed. I feel that there's a structure that I might have to conform to or I might have to present my projects within, to make them understandable to the council or to the general public. If you look at the work that I've been doing which is making people aware of the sights as they are, then why would I then go and just like build a pretty garden? (qtd. in Aoake and Williams 32)

Drawing little distinction between her project and plant life (as her project itself undermines this division), Worsnop conveys that art and plants similarly transition through cycles and stages, always in a process of becoming, often cyclical and without an apparent end point. This is constantly repressed by ends-driven, linear thinking which requires immediate completion and calculable benefit, rather than something which evolves slowly and continuously. Worsnop is wary of the ways plants are used simply to "beautify the city" rather than as crucial participants in ecosystems which form the basis of human life, and which can also help people appreciate and think about space and nonhuman nature in different ways.

Worsnop's concerns are clear when she points out her reluctance to engage with the council because "I think that if I go and talk to the council I wouldn't be given the time and space to just let the garden occur ... I'd just have one day to chuck it all in" and she would "have to present this whole concept and design". This wholeness, a completed "pretty garden" which is the kind of nature for which colonial Christchurch is best known, is, I suggest, the antithesis of what PG is trying to enact. I want to tentatively suggest an analogy with traditional and critical utopianism. Perhaps at stake here, is a conflict between a tidy, end-state utopianism and a utopianism-in-process. On the one hand, a kind of enforced conformity to a tidy, complete whole rather like end-state literary utopias and dystopias

where figures of nature or the organic body symbolise a kind of repressive unity. In contrast to this, PG's actions and discourse construct nature as messy, growing, unfolding, and in the process of *becoming* --more like critical utopianism.

Even at this scale, it is apparent how those who are trying to build something differently, even something as subtly utopian and small-scale as Plant Gang's projects, are frequently repressed by demands to produce a vision which is whole and complete—a “pretty garden” rather than a messy, growing, threatening space in the process of *becoming* as well as *being*. As Worsnop points out, this is not an organic way of being, but carefully constructed by and through bureaucracy and authority. Yet this ‘careful construction’ based on blueprints and abstractions, as utopian theorists well know, can also be horrific. I am taking this here, somewhat metaphorically, as exemplary of the one of the ‘problems’ for utopianism explored in this thesis. On the one hand, ‘end-state’ or unified utopian goals can be either repressive or impossible to enact because of holding a too fast and narrowly to ideas about human agency, and perhaps narrow ideals (as I explored in Part One). On the other hand, smaller scale or more ‘organic’ forms of utopianism are accused of being directionless, too messy or not bold enough and are quickly squashed by state, bureaucratic and corporate structures.

Such organic-ness and lack of perceivable direction is important in relation to utopianism as a kind of transformation of consciousness (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 229) because Thing-power, and wildness or otherness, writes Bennett, has the capacity to addle and change thoughts and perceptions (“Steps” 348). Worsnop hopes that her work is “making people aware of the sights as they are” rather than just going and building a “pretty garden”. Like Bennett, she is trying to spark alternative ways of seeing waste, rubble and emptiness, that it is not unoccupied and empty and ‘valueless’, or valued only because of

the financial value capitalists place on land. Instead, an awareness and appreciation for nonhuman life brings about a different kind of relationship with the nonhuman environment. Part of Plant Gang's projects then, might be called an effort to 'transform consciousness', a critical utopian and feminist utopian goal, regarding how people encounter plants in their everyday contexts.

Both Plant Gang and McAlpine's novels can be read as attempts to addle and change how we 'see' plants and nonhuman actants. In *Limits* and *Running* this occurs through the estranging effect of fantasy or utopianism and in Plant Gang by emphasising how so-called empty space and weeds can be seen otherwise. Similar to Bennett's thing-power it means being surprised at what we see as thing power has "the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle" ("Steps" 351). The 'things' and assemblages in both texts and 'real life' act to change human thoughts and perceptions about what is possible. Change, or increasing awareness through estrangement is an interruption which might incite a kind of wonder which could in turn usher in openness to alternative ways of being, thinking, experiencing and existing. As I argued earlier, wonder ruptures the experience of everyday ordinariness letting in the marvellous and miraculous (or magical) and can create an "ethical passion" or an "affective energetic" which creates an "alter-vision" that traverses subject and object (McManus).

It is through wonder, as an affect which *moves* us, and through nonhuman nature which can *move* us, that utopianism is brought into the present and is inscribed on the human body *in* its relations with nonhuman bodies. This surprise and movement might come from the interruption of nonhuman agency, whether in 'real' life as in the case of earthquakes or the persistent appearance and spontaneous growth of plants in otherwise constructed and sterile environments, or in the fictional imagining of plant and earthquake

potential in relation to transformation. Wonder, as I argued in Chapter Six, is not transcendent, but embodied and of the material world. Plant Gang's is a kind of utopianism which is based in immanent realities: what plants and nonhuman nature is *actually* like, as an alternative to the highly constructed and cultivated utopianisms enacted by state and corporate control of space.

The utopianism which I am trying to conceptualise here is one which is ambiguous, wild and indeterminate, rather than a tidy, perfected blueprint. Unpredictable actants can collectively act in surprising ways—ambiguously hopeful precisely because the environment is never finished or totally stable, and therefore contains this potential for otherness and alterity. This constant state of *becoming*, of a kind of ongoing 'not yet' has utopian connotations. Yet I use the word 'ambiguous' because both examples are responses to disaster or disruption: PG being a response to the Christchurch earthquakes, and McAlpine's novel a response to the disaster of neoliberalism and the potential disaster of nuclear war. This calls into question the link between utopianism and disaster, an ambiguity which takes utopianism away from conceptions of goodness, order and harmony. The inclusion of disorder, pain, conflict or disruption in utopianism will be the subject of Chapter Ten. Ambiguity, as Le Guin implies in her subtitle for *The Dispossessed* ("an ambiguous utopia"), seems crucial to the activeness of critical utopianism.

Texts themselves, whether novels or blog posts, can be ambiguous entities which act on the reader to change thoughts and perceptions. Both Plant Gang and McAlpine's depictions of plants in *Limits* are depictions or enactments of growth in rubble and waste, and the potential for life, plant life in particular, to continuously resist. These figures of growth imply a different kind of metaphor for utopian growth. Not capitalist and linear, not pristine, natural or endlessly exploitable. A depiction of a kind of agency—plants grow,

regardless of what humans do—which harbours a utopian impulse towards communality and life ongoing which transcends the human. In both examples, action happens through assemblages of plant-human-artistic expression-waste subverting the idea of a pristine nature uncontaminated by human culture and the notion of nature as a passive and harmonious whole often depicted in utopias or some eco-centric theory. This is significant because of how environmentalism and ecocriticism are already entwined with utopianism as counter-discourses which are demanding that things be different (Moylan, *Demand 2*) and for the ideals which they are often seen to be upholding. I have tried to suggest that more critical readings of what we call 'nature' can still be linked to utopianism, but in ways which refuse the paradisaical and the catastrophic tropes. Nature, in other words, is rife with 'not yet's'.

Chapter Nine: A Proximate Synthesis

The closeness and yet strangeness of matter (Bennett, “Steps” 349, Morton, *Ecology* 40) and the intimacies or proximities of direct action carried out through collaborating with humans and nonhumans calls for a discussion about relationality, proximity and process. I want to suggest that these themes, relationality and proximity, are a linking point between the texts examined so far, and more broadly, between feminist utopianism, anarchism and ecology. I would here like to take a moment to pause and consider some of these shared threads. Although there is no singular over-arching cause or grand narrative linking these, shared strands and relationships between anarchism, feminism and ecology, might nonetheless be identified. I argue that one of these is a rejection of hierarchical relationships and its replacement with proximal forms of relating. Through depicting human action and life without capitalism and hierarchy, the texts I’ve looked at can be read as assertions of the possibilities of different ways of relating based in proximity rather than abstract hierarchical structures, and imagining change from *within* the world rather than gazing at it from a distance. They variously convey a commitment to *how* things get done, resistance and utopianism as ongoing practices and the importance of context and embodiment. These are all instances of utopianism which emphasise process and the ‘here and now’ rather than a far-off goal or distant future.

Borrowing now from Irigaray whose work suggests a different kind of utopianism and whose concept or theme of proximity might be applied to these examples of utopianism, I want to suggest that there is a kind of utopianism or resistance in the concept of proximity. That is, in this particular cultural and historical context proximity is an alternative or *counter* to abstraction, hierarchy and estrangement. Proximity is the

antithesis of globalised capitalism, bureaucracy, centralised authority and patriarchy if these are about being uninvolved, abstracted, transcendent, objectifying and disinterested-- whether through positivist science or as a mode of governance. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Irigaray might be read as utopian for her interest in theorising new ways of being and speaking as women by paying attention to embodiment and lived experience, while also critiquing androcentric universalism (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 81). However, unlike traditional utopian thinkers, Irigaray claims to be both 'within' and 'proximal' rather than "outside a world that I built by always distancing myself from myself and from the pre-given universe that surrounds me" (Irigaray and Pluhacek, *Between* 3). She does not seek estrangement by separating herself and the world but seeks immanence and proximity as a utopian process.

To be proximal suggests a relation ('proximal to'), relatedness, or relationality, being another common theme across many of the discourses and texts included here. This idea that the relationality is the point, is the movement, or is the utopia, rather than a grand vision which transcends or is somehow 'outside' of these details of entanglement, is something I have tried to emphasise. Relatedness and proximity are presented as alternatives to ways of being and acting offered by patriarchal capitalism. Intimacy with and proximity to nonhuman nature and animals would decrease exploitation and destruction (Hall 348; Morton, "Queer Ecology" 277); a proximal *within-* the-world version of utopianism is a feminine and feminist one which rejects property and violence (Irigaray, *Between* 3); and proximity is closely related to the notion of 'immanence' which is anarchist and utopian (Fournier 201). Further, proximity relates to space and embodiment, and ecological intimacy requires a kind of proximity (Morton, "Queer Ecology" 273; Gandy 738).

Proximity is also perhaps the antithesis of abstract and authoritative power structures such as globalised capitalism, bureaucracy, centralised authority and patriarchy.

There are many ecological resonances here. For example, the interpretation of evolution as a narrative about cooperation, rather than competition (Morton, “Queer Ecology” 276). This is a rhizomatic and non-hierarchical view (277) which holds that beings exist “precisely because they are nothing but relationality” and co-existence which is “always to come” (277). The idea is to value intimacy and interconnectedness (Gandy 738)—but not in the sense of any grand whole, but rather as fragmentary: interrelatedness and closeness *because* which can also only occur because of difference/separateness (Morton 279). That is, it is *because* of never being able to ‘truly know’ the other (Adorno’s non-identity and gap between concept and world in Bennett, “Steps” 364) that it is *necessary* to try, and this may require the empathetic and utopian imagination.

Throughout Part Two I have been concerned with both evoking ‘alterity’ and the ‘unknowable’ or ‘more than representable’ (Brace and Johns-Putra 406) as an avenue for utopianism. This has raised some interesting paradoxes regarding transcendence and immanence. For example, non-identity and the not-yet seem transcendent, vague and elusive in part because they are *felt* as much as anything, and yet because these are feelings they are also embodied and therefore immanent. Similar to the claim Bennett makes about nonidentity as not an “*absent* absolute” which contains the promise of transcendence, it is the vitality of things and actants which are “less gestures of transcendence than manifestations of the vitality of immanent forces” (“Steps” 364). These immanent forces are not entirely knowable, but nor are they transcendent. This materialist view might better account for the ways in which Bennett, like other materialists/embodiment theorists (and

perhaps like McAlpine and Plant Gang) are engaged in trying to escape or transcend social constructions (and an anthropocentric perspective) in order to reach the unknowable, and the not-yet, but importantly this effort to 'transcend' and approach the unknowable/not-yet happens *through* the material, the embodied and the immanent.

The importance of relationality and imaginative empathy in the face of never knowing 'the other' (the not-self) appears throughout anarchist and feminist discourses. While it is impossible to 'know' the struggle of any other, as Heckert and Cleminson write on anarchism and sexuality, detachment is also not possible because "freedom is relational: one person's freedom is inseparable from another's freedom" (4). In a broader sense this can be taken to illustrate how various counter-culture discourses discussed here might be seen as inseparable from one another. The freedoms each seek are interconnected and many also share a common oppressor (namely, capitalism and patriarchy). To say that freedom is relational is also to collapse the individual/society dichotomy again, or bypass it through emphasising relationality rather than separateness. How we live, and how we think we should live, is of course always already relational. A utopia which relies on separatism, or a utopia for a minority, is not a utopia from feminist, anarchist, queer or eco perspectives.

Theory and the process of theorising can be considered a part of a utopianism which embraces plurality, alterity, potentials and becoming which can be related to proximity. For example, according to Jun, Deleuze sees that authority and dominant discourses can lead to closure, entrapment and structure and interrupt or restrict "the flows and movements which produce life" (134), and seeks to open up and liberate these flows, possibilities by emphasising potentials, becoming and alterity (140) —hope and belief in the 'not yet'. Electoral politics and expertism do not require proximity, whereas Deleuze's becoming and

potentials suggest specificity, strangeness, embodiment and located-ness. Proximity, rather than estrangement, might be the starting point for thinking about how we should live, and proximity might be thought of as a utopianly alternative approach itself which lends itself to plurality and liberating potentials.

As this interrelatedness *is* the process it is also consequently the utopian 'end'. As I described in Part One, for utopia-as-process, or critical and feminist utopias, the means and ends are one and the same, a trait shared by anarchist theory. In *The Dispossessed* and in *Woman* the authors depict societies which are not perfect but suffer disagreement, conflict and some degree of individual hardship. In critical utopias and feminist utopias (such as *Woman* and *The Dispossessed*) the utopia depicted *is* the story, the society *is* its relationships and events. This differs from traditional utopias in which description is privileged over narrative, form over process, in order to create a perfect 'speaking picture' (Manuel and Manuel 3; Marin 55), in other words, privileging ends over means. In both Anarres and Mattapoisett "how things get done" is more important than any 'ultimate' goals. These societies are built around direct forms of relating, and have rejected most forms of representation and mediation such as a centralised state and forms of currency. All work and social life occurs through self-determining syndicates which share all resources between them. Without money "the real motives are clearer" with work being done for the sake of work itself rather than for some other abstracted 'ends' (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 125). This way of living entails coherence between means and ends which precludes the possibility of exploitation and alienation, characteristic of capitalist forms of life.

With a similar commitment to 'process' and exploring different ways in which things can 'get done', McAlpine critiques realism, rationality and authority gendered masculine, and emphasizes vivid and realistic depictions of nonhuman nature and women's embodied

experience, using the fantastical as a critique of the dominance of realism as a literary and theoretical mode. This is political at another level, because of how realism, scientific positivism and logocentrism again usually rely on abstract or alienated forms of relating and creating knowledge. McAlpine's alternative to this involves ways of relating to the world such as through listening, or sound. As I have argued, encountering and relating through senses (including metaphorically) such as listening and touch may constitute less objectifying ways of relating, and open possibilities for humans and nonhumans to effect each other, including in ways which might encourage greater empathy. Again, this speaks to a certain valuing of proximity and intimacy, while also constituting a kind of utopianism as I have argued in the previous chapter. In particular it is entwined with forms of resistance which in the novel are depicted in ongoing and anarchistic terms with the implication being that power and resistance are contextual, local and specific, with no ultimate solution or utopia.

However, I have also been implying that feminist utopian texts function in part through estrangement, for example, suggesting that perhaps McAlpine's novels can be read as feminist 'transformations of consciousness'. Perhaps to speak vaguely in terms of 'consciousness' functions as a kind of generic universalisation which 'transcends' context, to be more generally applied to the collective utopian practice or project of imagining alternatives. This relates to a broader contradiction worth examining. Utopianism implies estrangement: a distancing from the present in order to imagine a better future (Moylan, *Demand* 33). Yet I have argued that the utopianism or ways of theorising about how we should live discussed so far is one rooted in proximity, immanence and relatedness. The 'estranging' function of utopianism and interpretation of utopia as 'elsewhere' or 'not yet' sits at odds with an emphasis on proximity and also with discourses such as anarchism and

feminism. That is, if utopianism is about *estrangement* from the present in order to more clearly see current society and culture from a *distance*, and if a subject/object dichotomy, the privileging of vision, and distance (disinterest, externality) are patriarchal or androcentric values which feminist philosophy tries to overcome or deconstruct, then what does an estranged and abstracted utopianism mean for feminism? Similarly utopianism as an escapist or abstracted practice makes little sense for anarchism, and utopianism oriented towards endless progress and improvement likely does little for environmentalist agendas.

This contradiction of 'proximity' or 'estrangement', is analogous to querying to what extent the utopianisms and resistant discourses I have been describing actually break from dominant discourses. Quite arguably, utopianism, which almost inevitably reflects 'the present', to some extent reproduces aspects of the dominant culture. As stated from the outset, and in keeping with Bauman's proposition that utopian desires have migrated away from the collective good and towards the self, this might involve utopianisms which reinforce notions of self and identity: self-actualising, autonomy, independence and diversity. Furthermore, postmodern 'difference for the sake of difference' and otherness--shared by capitalism/neoliberalism and resistant movements alike--can be viewed as itself utopian (Garforth "No Intentions" 24). For example, "diversity as an ethical stance in itself" (Heckert and Cleminson 3). This will be more specifically addressed in chapter twelve, but here I would like to point out some initial theoretical dilemmas which arise when we try to separate 'resistant' (or utopian, alternative etc) discourses from 'dominant' ones. In some ways it might seem that so-called resistant discourses are simply demanding more of the same, as Fisher has said of the postmodern-capitalist consumer (75). Another interpretation of the situation is that the existence of these similarities indicate that dominant discourses are ridden with utopian impulses (Bloch, 42; Jameson, "Reification" 145) which are not

being delivered (Buchanan 81). A third consideration is to question the extent to which diversity, progress and utopianism are themselves capitalist ideologies.

There is tension between and within utopias and utopian thinking (any future-oriented thinking) about foreclosing or opening to future possibilities; stability or instability, but this tension is not that between a dominant and resistant discourse. While traditional utopias depict complete and stable societies, McAlpine's novels and *Plant Gang*, as well as theories in anarchism, post-anarchism, feminism, queer theory, ecology and environmentalism, depict or wish for open-endedness. Yet curiously, instability and constant growth is also a key component of capitalism: the 'real' utopia of the 'free-market' is open-ended and unstable, and the precariousness of globalisation and capitalism's open-ended drive for progress is celebrated and encouraged. We might ask then, whether instability, flux, precariousness and open-ended progress are inherently capitalist ideas.

Creativity, process, continuousness, atemporality and alterity appear to be important to theorising, yet for some thinkers, the postmodern preoccupation with alterity, apparently also important for creativity and boundary-pushing theorising, seems troubling, or at least insufficient. According to Badiou, alterity does not produce a transformative politics because it produces sameness while reifying difference and thus makes difference static (McManus). As a result, the 'otherness' of the future has been lost, as in, the potential for the future to be disruptive has disappeared (Anderson, "Emergency Futures" 4). Instead, there is a sense of being outside of history where "the felt experience of the present is one of an ongoing state of transition, which tends to present itself less as a sense of possibility of the truly new than as a paradoxically frenzied sense of repetition" (Cunningham qtd. in Anderson "Emergency Futures" 5). Jameson sees this as perhaps best encapsulated in the figure of the TV. Despite, or perhaps because of, its endless streams of new and exciting

images, these in their 'novelty' become really just more of the same (in *Postmodernism* 70). This can be seen more widely as representative of postmodernism itself. Somehow, a preoccupation with novelty and alterity blocks the new and 'not yet'—difference is made static and converted to the same (McManus). Yet as McManus points out, it is perhaps not the focus on alterity in and of itself that is the problem, but the hierarchical ordering of knowledge over wonder: it is when wonder is "consumed by knowledge" that utopian "surplus" thought is lost (McManus). Perhaps it is the *instrumentalization* of alterity, for example, its use for profit extraction, that is problematic.

Because there is also an inconsistency here. It may seem that capitalism is richly diverse and unstable, but present societal and cultural structures also prevent the creation of alternatives, in order to maintain the capitalist system. Further, attempts to build open-ended alternative visions and ideas are frequently repressed by demands to produce a singular unified vision which is whole and complete. For example Plant Gang describes the impossibility of making or facilitating a city garden which is natural, cyclical, not just a "pretty garden" but a garden in the process of becoming (as growing things are) without an apparent 'end point' of completion, beautification and calculable benefit. Similarly, movements such as Occupy³ and other recent anarchist related movements have been criticised for being too incohesive and lacking well defined utopian visions (Maiguascha 90). Frequently the political and intellectual left laments its own inability to provide a unified front in the face of such criticisms. Is this an acceptable criticism? Current power structures, such as capitalism and patriarchy, also do not provide a clear vision or end goal. There is a

³ A movement incited by the 2008 economic crash which began with occupying Wall Street in the USA to protest extreme inequality and corporate control of political, economic and social life. The movement also sought to prefigure a different kind of society based on what can be described as anarchistic principles (Hammond 288, 289).

double-standard within this which does not account for valuing open-endedness for itself.

Unruly capitalist growth and overdevelopment is the only kind of growth permitted.

However growth and progress themselves do not necessarily serve capitalist interests.

There might be other ways of growing which unsettle current dominant regimes.

Theoretically, and in fiction, this can and has been imagined. For example Le Guin writes of music in *Dispossessed* as consisting of 'a forward process which consists entirely in the relationship of the parts' (146). A 'forward process' might overcome a dichotomy between progress and stagnancy, or between linearity and cyclarity, and also between stability and chaos. It is moving yet open-ended, but it is unlike 'progress' which suggests a prescribed route towards a predetermined goal. This means that linearity and the possibility of change or becoming can be retained in some form without 'progress' as it is usually understood. Importantly, this can only occur through interrelatedness, "the relationship of the parts" (146). The interrelatedness is the process: again, the relationality constitutes the process which constitutes the utopia. A utopianism grounded in progress might be capitalist, but is a utopianism of process and relatedness usable by capitalism? Are open-ended, pluralistic and critical utopianisms capable of rejecting that which threatens them?

Unlike island-like utopias, and separatist communities, utopianism-as-process has no clear 'outside'. Yet the absence of boundaries might have implications for 'utopian' discourses such as anarchism, feminism and environmentalism, and the possibility of resistance to capitalist cultures and patriarchy. Without walls, how can these avoid assimilation into capitalism which is so adept at encompassing all counter-cultural resistance? Yet in postmodern theory, the very idea of 'inside' and 'outside' has become mythical, or rather, is now taken to be socially and culturally constructed rather than a natural and inevitable given (in regard to bodies, identities and nation states for example).

Some (post)anarchists seem optimistic about this point. For example postmodern anarchist theorists such as Call advocate mirroring capitalism and taking advantage of fluid and detached signs in order to subvert these for anarchist means, and replace dominant discourses with radical anarchist ones (Call, "A is for Anarchy" 169). For example, twisting and appropriating traditional notions (of language) can deprive them of their earlier meaning (Eckert 77). Yet engaging with dominant cultural discourses might equally lead to depoliticisation and assimilation through which a resistant discourse is 'made safe' and congruent with a dominant one. The ways in which many environmental discourses have become mainstream, non-threatening to, and even supportive of capitalism and 'the market', are one such example (Gaard 27, 33; Petersen and Lupton 103).

Part One explored views of utopianism relating to social justice, harmony, equality, human agency, subjectivity, autonomy, individual freedom and the 'good society' and the ways anarchist, feminist and environmentalist authors and theorists depicted or explored these ideas. In Part Two I have sought to move away from these assumptions and explore a form of utopianism more oriented towards alterity, novelty, otherness, process and proximity. I posited these as forms of utopianism more akin to postmodern notions of fragmentation and specificity and which included at times de-centering the human. Yet, recalling earlier critiques of the liquidness, instability and precarity of postmodern life, perhaps there should be wariness about how the sort of randomness and fragmentation suggested in Part Two chapter maps onto these exact elements of capitalist postmodern life. This will be a point explored in greater depth in the final part.

Part Three: Utopian Reflections

Every era must reconceptualise what it means to be hopeful and posit alternatives, yet the difficulties postmodernism and capitalism seem to pose to utopianism and resistance make this especially pertinent. In both Part One and Part Two I have mentioned some instances in which dominant and resistant utopianisms are intertwined. They might be criticised for not being ‘alternative enough’ to be considered utopian or resistant, and may be read as reinforcing or too easily assimilated by capitalist and neoliberal reifications of individualism, diversity, difference and autonomy. In this final part, I return to earlier mentioned themes and dilemmas of self and other, inclusion and exclusion, assimilation and resistance, in order to discuss what utopianism might be used to mean in the context of a totalising system such as heteropatriarchal capitalism, using Baudrillard’s term “integral reality” (Featherstone 472).

In Part Two, subverting humanist assumptions about utopianism, I explored the ways in which utopianism might be used to explore or refer to things beyond or other than intentionality or human agency and control. As Moylan has said of the critical utopia’s contestation of perfection, “it has become necessary to destroy utopia in order to save it” (Moylan, *Demand* 46). In this final part I try to probe this idea a little further: how much can utopia be reformed, destroyed or opened out before it ceases to function as a vehicle for hope, critique and transformation? In this next chapter, I problematise another aspect of utopianism: happiness and harmony. In doing so, I tackle the ambiguity of a utopianism which accounts for pain and conflict. As I have argued, utopianism, particularly in relation to postmodern theory and social movements, is not just about harmony but also plurality, or, put another way, fragmentation. Disordered as much as ordered, utopian visions (McAlpine)

or actions (Plant Gang) can be related to disaster and destruction, and this might be, for better or worse, a route to transformation and alterity. However, this is rather ethically dubious and presents some problems for anarchist and feminist praxes which seek congruence in means and ends.

In some ways, that utopianism can be a painful process is quite obvious given that utopianism arises from the “radical insufficiency of the solutions at hand” (Moylan, *Demand* 40) and that it is dissatisfaction that is at the centre of hope driving desire and transforming “each wish into a figure of the utopian wish itself” (22). Disappointment, failed alternatives, failed hope and utopianism itself has been broken over and over. Yet perhaps this fracturing, this lack of boundaries, the potential for everything to be ‘out of the box’, might be in fact quite productive for utopianism. Interruption and rupture, I have argued, is an important part of theorising, of utopianism and of moving through the world. It might be an outcome of wonder (McManus 2007) or astonishment, philosophical modes, and forms of contemplation (Bloch 40; Muñoz 5). The painful can also be quite astonishing, rupturing, interruptive and thus generative.

The failure of alternatives to immediately materialise in the present is not a reason to disparage utopianism and political stances which insist that alternatives are possible. As Muñoz argues, “the eventual disappointment of hope is not a reason to forsake it as a critical thought process, in the same way that even though we can know in advance that felicity of language ultimately falters, it is nonetheless essential” (9). Like language, and like theorising, as I argued in Part Two, what is important is how utopianism is used and for what ends. While there is a certain “riskiness” of using this “utopia work” (whether in fiction, theory or activism), the greater risk is the abandonment of utopia work and of “looking elsewhere while we become entangled in the threads of a (his)story that gets

written for us” (Wagner-Lawlor 195). The use of utopianism for feminism—the subject of this next chapter-- is not so much to suggest perfectly formed alternatives so much as to pay attention to fleeting and larval instances of hope which may inevitably be disappointed and marginalised. As Muñoz puts it, although “utopian feelings can and regularly will be disappointed they are nonetheless indispensable to the act of imagining transformation” (9). How feminist utopianism can in turn use the disappointment of utopian feelings where these are challenged by the fragmentariness of postmodern life, or the totality of heteropatriarchal capitalism, is the problem to which this final part seeks, but does not attain, resolution.

Chapter Ten: Utopain: Unhappy Hope

Hope is not about happiness, says Rebecca Solnit, and it is not about luck (5). “Hope is an axe you break down doors with in an emergency; because hope should shove you out the door” (5). Hope is what happens in the dark, and utopianism is not necessarily sweetness and light. Feminism, which, will be the subject of this next chapter, is a type of utopian discourse which is not simply geared towards happiness and harmony. Indeed it is quite difficult to find feminist academic literature, or fiction, which presents happy and harmonious visions or ideals. Rather, as Ahmed points out, feminism engages a great deal with pain, anger, disappointment, and in fact can even be *against* contentment, satisfaction, and happiness so far as these things detract from revolutionary action or consciousness raising (for example, ‘the happy housewife’, Ahmed 245). In favour of seeking emancipation, feminism in some ways rebels against the ideals of happiness which have been offered to women, the requirement that women be happy, sociable, pleasant, smiling, helpful and generally harmonious. This would seem contradictory for a movement which, presumably, wishes to increase the happiness of oppressed genders. Yet, to outright reject conflict, dissent, and affective responses to injustices, represents a fear of utopian possibilities. Attempts to smooth over or de-escalate negative emotions functions in the interests of the status-quo. According to Lorde, anger, for example “is visionary and the fear of anger, or the transformation of anger into silence, is a turning away from the future” (qtd. in Ahmed 247).

What then, does it mean to call this kind of potentially pain-inducing or pain-inclusive discourse ‘utopian’? Rather than discounting its utopianism on the basis of its promoting dissent, discontent, anger, acknowledging pain and even instigating conflict, I

want to stay with the idea that feminism *is* utopian because of its demand that things be different and its seeking of transformation. I instead argue that this points to a revised form of utopianism which somehow accommodates pain, dystopia, discontent and dissent. While the same argument might be applied to anarchism and environmentalism, here I take feminism (and some queer theory) as exemplary given the established occurrence of pain, affect and embodiment in feminist theory, as part of a movement which has been driven by women's experiences of violence, injury and discrimination (Ahmed 242). For example Wagner-Lawlor quotes Braidotti's reminder that feminist theory seeks to detach real life women, the female feminist subject, from the representation of 'Woman' as constructed by the male imagination. This is described as "major surgery" which is "painful to both subjects" (Wagner-Lawlor 10). In a sense, feminist theory and feminist utopianisms act to "make visible "painful structures" of past and present, as well as envision alternative structures" (13) with that which is uncomfortable or even painful being part of the process of imagining alternatives. According to Ahmed, 1970s feminist therapy and consciousness raising groups can be thought of "precisely in terms of the transformation of pain into collectivity and resistance" (242). This speaks to the possibilities of utopian ideas and resistant action (as means to 'utopian' ends), arising from dark places.

Baccolini's reading of dystopianism resonates with the utopian potential of 'dark places'. For Baccolini, dystopias nonetheless contain hopeful utopian elements and, contrary to what some utopian theorists argue (that the rise of dystopia in the cultural consciousness functions in the interests of capitalism to insist that there is no alternative), suggests that dystopia is now the predominant way in which *utopia* is actually accessed (Baccolini, "Dystopia Matters" 3). This is especially the case for women's or feminist dystopias. Feminist writing often challenges and reconstructs the bounds of conventional

genre (2). Women, having much less to lose from the collapse of patriarchy and civilisation as we know it, seem more comfortable depicting dystopic scenarios which present the opportunity for a new start (2). This contrasts with traditional utopias written by men (such as More, Bacon, Morris) in which, although happy and harmonious, do not depict much transformation and improvement of life for women (2). This is all to say that the relationship between utopia and happiness, and utopia and pain or what we might assume to be undesirable, is more complicated than may usually be assumed.

Some of this has been implied in previous chapters. In Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* Connie's "heightened consciousness", receptiveness and ability to experience future Mattapoissett does not bring about happiness but actually increased pain (Seabury 153). It does however compel her to action in her present (Moylan, *Demand* 150) which is itself a difficult and painful exercise and which likely leads to difficult outcomes for her. This is the trap those seeking liberation find themselves in: consciousness raising and awareness of one's own oppression can be very painful. This awareness can produce dissonance which is painful and requires one to either act or suppress the dissonance, but this action which might resolve the dissonance and lead to liberation is often severely punished. Connie's awareness of loss is painful and moves her towards action. She laments that "if only they had left me something!...Only one person to love...But I have nothing. Why shouldn't I strike back?" (Piercy 371-372). In this sense utopianism is associated with pain as much as hope and perhaps to some extent accounts for anti-utopian sentiment in current western culture.

In what follows I attempt to unravel some of the ideas elicited above by discussing critical utopianism in conjunction with painful topics, using the examples of depression and social conflict. The overlapping of pain and conflict, with feminist utopianism, seems problematic from the perspective that utopianism is often linked with the desire for

happiness and harmony. Yet its total exclusion also sits at odds with Wagner-Lawlor's positing of feminist utopianism in terms of "radical hospitality" (9). As Morrison has famously said, utopia is as much about who is *excluded* as about who is *included* (in Wagner-Lawlor 9). Yet the feminist project has always been to trouble these borders of utopia as the island trope which excludes 'others' (Morrison) (9). In a response to author Toni Morrison's criticism that utopia is always defined by who gets left out, Wagner-Lawlor notes the theme of hospitality and home or refuge throughout feminist utopian literature, and theorises "radical hospitality" as a basis for relating in these novels (9; 190). Resisting definitions of closure, feminist speculative fictions are based on *Eros* rather than *Logos* and hospitality conceptualised and enacted in this way—a coming together of bodies (Wagner-Lawlor 190). There is, I think a kind of loving and yet ambiguous inclusiveness about such a way of relating to the world and 'the other'. A question I want to raise in relation to this logic, is how feminist utopianism might position itself in relation to pain and dissent, and whether it might accommodate or seek to exclude these on principle when pain and conflict already overlap with critical utopianism and feminist theory. With this in mind, I consider critiques of the pathologisation of depression and social conflict and, in particular, I draw on Awkward-Rich's notion of annihilation and thinking *with*, rather than *against*, pain and conflict for social critical theory.

If nothing else, such entanglements are disruptive to the perception that utopianism is synonymous with happiness and perfection, and for that reason supposedly incompatible with critical theory. I am suggesting that including 'imperfections' such as pain, depression and social conflict might have bearing on a critical feminist utopianism committed to embodiment, hospitality, relationality, criticality and materiality. My intention is to question the notion that utopianism is idealistic, and further, that the more traditionally utopian wish

to annihilate conflictual or painful ways of being is a straightforward matter. In a wider sense, where critical theories are taken to be important forms of utopianism because they yearn for and are often entangled with working for change, these are questions about dealing with unhappiness and conflict within such working (theoretically or otherwise) for more liveable or possible worlds.

I approach this topic with reservations, wary that treatment of painful topics might appear as callous, unsympathetic or romanticised, none of which are sentiments I intend to promote. I am especially concerned not to romanticise the painful struggles of oppression, colonisation, racism, poverty and all forms of othering and exclusion, and aware that it is easy for subjects speaking from positions of white middle-class cis and able-ist privilege to treat pain and suffering as abstractions and mere intellectual amusements. There is also the issue that, as Ahmed (quoting Wendy Brown) acknowledges, emphasising pain in feminist politics can mean that “subjects become invested in the wound, such that the wound comes to stand in for identity itself” but this focus on pain as being what creates feminism is a “failure to ‘move away’ from the site of subordination” (243). In the context of utopianism, one might also recall Orwell’s dry remark that “nearly all creators of utopia have resembled the man who has toothache, and therefore thinks happiness consists in not having toothache... whoever tries to imagine perfection simply reveals his own emptiness.” (1943, n.p). Utopia, like desire, is assumed to originate from ‘lack’ and this is depicted as ‘not really’ utopian, or not utopian ‘enough’.

Given, the ambiguous forms of utopianism explored in Part Two, I am reluctant to conclude that utopianism might arise merely from ‘lack’ alone, which can also carry the risk of romanticising or trivialising struggle. Rather my intention is to dwell awhile in these complications, recognising them as indicative of something ambiguous which is worth

exploring. *Necessary* to explore even, because pondering the possibility of using utopian theory to more fully account for pain as a mundane fact of being embodied, rather than seeing it as 'bad' and trying to eliminate it or ignore it (Awkward-Rich 824) might be productive. It might even entail seeking more empathetic, realistic, radical and enlightening ways of thinking about, and with, the most difficult parts of individual, social, cultural and political existences. That is to say, without suggesting that pain and suffering should be romanticised, treated as homogenous categories, or depicted as inevitable, they are also too important to be dismissed, and perhaps the utopian re-imagining of how we perceive and inhabit the world might extend to pain and 'the bad' as much as 'the good' or the everyday.

Further, accounting for pain might be a method by which critical utopianism becomes more developed or 'realistic'. Utopianism is so often (mis)read as a perfectionist endeavour to eliminate all the 'bad', and yet many find this an unconvincing or even intolerable proposition. As Melissa Harris-Perry puts it, in Brodsky and Nalebuff's *The Feminist Utopia Project*, "a world in which nothing is wrong and there is no struggle is not a compelling existence and isn't particularly fulfilling. My utopia would need to include struggle because it's part of what it means to be human" (57). Similarly, as Margaret Atwood has said, "In Paradise...there are no stories, because there are no journeys. It's loss and regret and misery and yearning that drive the story forward, along its twisted road." (qtd. in Wagner-Lawlor 81). Despite, or perhaps because of, this kind of torment it is stories which are said to carry and catalyse hope (196).

This is clearly the case for critical utopias, which convey paths to better states of affairs, and yet intentionally accommodate dissent, pain, suffering and conflict (Moylan, *Demand* 36), in part because these utopias are constituted by *story*, and *process* as much as

ends (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 24). As I have noted, following Moylan, in critical feminist utopias such as the works of Marge Piercy and Ursula Le Guin the means and ends are one and the same in terms of depicting the utopian society, and in terms of how life is lived in these fictional societies. This idea that the relationality is the point, the story, or is the utopia, rather than transcended by some grander vision existing 'outside' of these details of entanglement, is crucial. In this sense, they are not just depicts of 'how should we live', as Levitas also summarises utopianism ("The Imaginary" 48), but of living *with*. As I have indicated in previous chapters, this points to a congruence of means and ends, but the fact that this almost becomes tautological is what propels this chapter. For if the means *are* the ends, and the means *include* pain and suffering, what does this say about critical feminist utopianism?

Inclusion and exclusion

As I claimed in Part Two, what is considered worthy of inclusion in discourse, theories or thought, at least to some extent, implies a hoped-for outcome, whether this is to challenge or reinforce the status quo. As Heldke points out, the value of philosophy and theory is not to discover reality, but rather to seek various ways of thinking about whatever 'reality' we have constructed or in which we have found ourselves (16). The ways in which such thinking about reality occurs, as well as the work of constructing theories, are inseparable from the ends one hopes will materialise (16). For example, feminist theoretical critiques of society and culture are carried out in order to help women understand their situation, and through revealing dominant discourses as constructions rather than 'truths', suggest that things could be, or are already, otherwise. That is, what is included in theory-

making prefigures the intended political outcome. But if the intended political outcome is *less* pain, violence, anger and sadness, then wouldn't feminist utopianism, its activist and fictional forms, and its contingents in anarchism, socialism, queer movements and environmentalism do best to exclude or ignore pain, dissent, violence and aggression?

This logic of inclusion/exclusion returns us to a more traditional form of utopianism which, as Toni Morrison has so poignantly observed, is so often defined by who is excluded (Wagner-Lawlor 9). This critique prompts Wagner-Lawlor to reformulate an understanding of feminist utopianism as constituted not by who and what is excluded but rather by 'radical hospitality' which rejects inclusion/exclusion as the foundation of utopianism, and instead seeks to accommodate all, with the emphasis being on celebrating alterity and difference. From this perspective, utopianism is the "infinite task of dwelling among the networks of affiliations, extending hospitality elsewhere, such that one imagines community as itself a kind of living, desiring entity, a loving communion where everybody comes" (190). Yet how far might this radical hospitality extend? Is it possible to be open and hospitable to that or those who might inflict harm, pain or seek to dominate? This is the very dilemma for feminism: how to accommodate the other (Wagner-Lawlor 10).

Texts such as McAlpine's might be read as critiquing the risk of exclusion and separatism which seems characteristic of traditional utopian fiction. As Hattie in *Running Away from Home* remarks, "people are mostly all right. You just have to make enough room for them. There's usually enough room'" (236). McAlpine's hellish depiction of the isolating 'refuges' the sisters Annabel and Eve are forced to seek in *The Limits of Green*, stand in contrast to the all-inclusive household of Hattie in *Running*. Like *Woman on the Edge of Time*, these novels do not refrain from the prospect of engaging in conflict, dissent and even violence as part of trying to bring about a new kind of world. In this sense, they might be

described as *more* tolerant and inclusive of things usually considered the antithesis of utopianism: harmony and happiness.

This is the tension I am trying to address here in relation to pain and social conflict: on the one hand because process is as important as ends, action including theory, should involve the 'ends' which are hoped for (for example, different ways of relating, resisting oppression, a more inclusive culture) while excluding that which is antithetical to these ends (such as pain, oppression, violence, domination). On the other hand, this again produces the logic of inclusion/exclusion being criticised (Wagner-Lawlor 9). Taking Wagner-Lawlor's radical hospitality literally might be used to invite consideration of accommodating all and if applied here would entail accommodating pain and conflict, but not at the expense of happiness and harmony or vice versa. This apparently defeats the point of utopianism and feminism alike, but so too does exclusion. This is the crux of the problem. (How) can utopianism evoke the concept of radical hospitality (Wagner-Lawlor 19), perhaps even accepting all-comers including pain and conflict as they are (Awkward-Rich 824), and in both theory and practice while also accepting responsibility to try and bring about better worlds? Can radical hospitality make unnecessary a logic of inclusion/exclusion?

It is also worth considering how happiness, health and harmony are constructed and posited as universal 'good's, in particular the individualised 'search' for 'better' living and better selves. Similar critiques about universal 'goods' are informative here. For example, Amy Allen contends that emancipation, as it is used in critical theory, is constructed from western perspectives in (western) feminist theory, but it is universalised in a way which enables a view of non-western countries as 'backwards' and oppressive because women there do not meet the western version of emancipation (520). As Allen argues, this reification of emancipation and freedom is entangled with a particular concept of progress

“as the outcome of a process of historical learning and development”, a linear path to something ‘better’, and superior to ways of life which do not align with the values of modernity (521). Emancipation, as it is constructed in western feminism and critical theory, is problematically constructed as evidence of a culture’s degree of advancement, enlightenment, and arrival at a final destination on a linear path to ‘progress’ (520-521, 525).

Curiously, this leads Allen to reject utopianism, rather than emancipation, and declare the double function of criticality and vision enacted by feminist theories to be a “looming paradox” in feminist and critical theory, because, she argues, to be both critical and utopianly emancipatory at once is contradictory (513). If, following Foucault, we believe that there is no outside to power, then there is no possibility for a subject to exist outside of power relations and for “genuine” (“utopian”) emancipation (515). Allen’s resolution is to rethink our understanding of emancipation along lines which are not reliant upon a vision of a “power free utopia” (515). Allen assumes, then, that utopia is, by definition, power free and seeks to modify the notion of emancipation through theorising “something like a model of emancipation without utopia” (518). As argued in previous chapters, feminist and critical utopianisms do not insist on a ‘power free’ utopia, or even an ‘outside’ to utopia, and rather reject the notion of a perfect end-state utopia in favour of advocating for continual resistance to power in all its forms (Moylan, *Demand* 100). Allen seems to build her argument from an assumption that utopianism is equated with perfection, and in the case of critical and feminist theory, perfect emancipation. However, as argued in Chapter One, the ‘perfect state’ version of utopianism tends to exclude feminist and critical utopianism and may be little more than a reflection of modernist and androcentric thinking (Garforth “No Intentions” 10; Sargisson *Contemporary* 54).

Similarly, harmony and happiness are constructed in ways which reflect particular cultural ideals which are not always inclusive, realistic and productive. In another context, drawing attention to the preoccupation, in critical theory, with liberation and the elimination of tension, discomfort and suffering, Awkward-Rich contemplates the possibility of theory which does something other than try to liberate or rehabilitate subjects of study (824). Following Tobin Siebers, Awkward-Rich ponders what theory would be like if it more fully accounted for pain as a mundane fact of being embodied, rather than as something 'bad' to eliminate or ignore (824). Instead, Awkward-Rich asks what it might be like to think *through*, rather than reject, positions and experiences which are uncomfortable, controversial or painful. For example, states of depression might be drawn from as a form of critical thought in order to help think through the conflict between trans-exclusive feminism and feminism (Awkward-Rich 825). Awkward-Rich presents both the internal conflicts of depression and social conflicts as hinging on the 'problem' of continued existence despite a wish for annihilation. That is, certain forms of living and thinking (within a person or between people or identities) may be hostile towards each other (Awkward-Rich 825), such as trans identities and trans-exclusive feminism, or utopianism and discontent perhaps, and demand each other's annihilation or exclusion.

Depressed Utopians

As opposed to the pathological construction of depression, Awkward-Rich takes depression to be a "particular form of feeling and habit of thought that informs interpretive practice" (823) and rejects the assumption that "depression and a (too-) rich internal world are characteristics that cannot be incorporated into agential and authoritative personhood"

(823). As a form of feeling and thought which interprets and asks particular questions, Awkward-Rich's 'depressed transsexual' might find common ground with the feminist utopian figure of the "speculator" who, to quote Haraway, interrogates "what may count as the case about the world," in order to contemplate more "liveable worlds" (qtd. in Wagner-Lawlor 12). Perhaps depression, then, can be included as such a way of 'knowing' the case about the world, by Awkward-Rich's reading of depression as a form of critical thought. Pain, conflict and depression may not seem 'liveable', and yet they are lived *with*.

Although depression or unhappiness seem inconsistent with the idea of utopianism, it is not clear that these are less viable states than wonder and hope, (McManus), astonishment (Bloch 42; Muñoz 5), irrationality and imagination (Wagner-Lawlor 185) which are all accommodated in utopian and feminist theory. In any case, as Awkward-Rich intimates, these are perhaps already not easily discernible from states and experiences such as pain, conflict or depression which, like utopian experimentation, are often stigmatised or repressed in everyday life. Utopianism is, in a sense, depressed in current western culture. The feminist utopian interest in transforming consciousness in fiction often involves engaging with the 'mad', the stigmatised, the 'internal worlds'. What we call 'interior' states, such as embodiment, consciousness, thought and language (Baum 226; Burwell 84) are foregrounded, and this may involve engaging with the 'abnormal' and madness in order to open up a 'utopian' space in which to create new understandings not accessible to the rationalist mind (Fancourt 95). Again, this is not just 'consciousness raising', but 'consciousness changing' (Sargisson, *Contemporary* 229) and perhaps stigmatised mental states such as depression or 'mental disorder' might also be included as explorations of 'consciousness'. In this deviation from what is considered normal and desirable, the expression and even celebration of 'the bad feelings' might also constitute a kind of

orientation towards utopian alterity—not a desire for wholesome happiness and harmony in the Thomas More-ian sense, but utopian in the sense of desiring otherness, alterity, an impulse to think or feel in a different way, or not to feel or think at all.

The “not-so-modest feminist witness” who “works at seeking alternative ways of being nowhere” (Wagner-Lawlor 13), may wander into ‘nowheres’ which do not feel good, and may even find dwellings there. Awkward-Rich troubles the acceptance that seeking a “way out” of pathologised states of being such as depression is the ‘correct’ response, and that there is a clear line between the darkness of depression and the ‘light’ we all want to reach (825). This clearly contrasts to the view that it is pathological to dwell on pain. Yet, to ‘dwell’ on the difficult or painful as a kind of space echoes the feminist utopian urge of dwelling and to ‘be at home somewhere’ (Wagner-Lawlor 195). What moves us and what we feel is also “what holds us in place or gives us a dwelling place” (Ahmed 240). For example, in Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* the protagonist’s ‘mental illness’, for which she is institutionalised, is narratively blurred with her ability to experience a utopian future community and way of life (Fancourt 95). This can be read as a critique of what is pathologised as ‘mental illness’ or ‘disorder’ as is interrogated elsewhere in critical psychology and social theory. William Davies, claims that the disengagement pathologized as “depression” interrupts the obligation to be emotionally invested in capitalism and thus constantly productive (*Happiness* 9). Whose bodies and minds come to be pathologised, is contingent on conformist, productivist, ableist, and neoliberal discourses which lay responsibility on the individual and position the constant seeking of hedonistic experiences as ‘normal’ and obligatory (Fisher 22), and ‘health’ as defined by productivity (Le Besco).

Davis, rejecting the medical model's construction of depression as biochemical 'imbalance', instead suggests that "what is disabling about depression is a neoliberal society in which membership is premised on productivity and positive affect" (qtd. in Awkward-Rich 825). To this end, in popular culture and academic work alike, utopic discussions about happiness, health, riches and wellbeing have taken on a neoliberal and forceful tone which becomes dystopic for many, particularly where these are unattainable, costly and reinforce narrow constructions of 'normal' in the service of capitalist interests (Cederström and Spicer 21; Davies, *Happiness* 9; McGee 12). Striving for perfect utopian selves, as mentioned in Chapter Four, makes irrelevant collective action (Brabazon 70). As hooks and Ahmed point out, simply "naming one's own personal pain is insufficient, and, indeed, can easily be incorporated into the narcissistic agendas of neoliberal and therapeutic culture" (245). To be active, pain must be politicised, and here it finds connections with utopianism.

As *deviations* from the normalisation of health, hedonism and conformity rampant in western neoliberal capitalist cultures, pain, unhappiness and disagreement may act as interruptions. Sharing a space of marginalisation, it makes some sense that pain and suffering be included in utopian theory as accidental vehicles for estrangement or intervention. That is, as utopianism is an intervention in the narratives which construct our everyday lives, pain and conflict too, like a spanner in the works, halt 'business as usual' and demand a pause to reconsider. For example, Fisher claims that mental illness (along with environmental crises) represents a rupturing of the Real into what he terms capitalist realism—the insistence that there is no alternative to capitalist relations (Fisher 19). According to Fisher, "mental health, in fact, is a paradigm case of how capitalist realism operates" (19) and while capitalist realism constructs mental health in terms of apolitical facts, critical psychologists posit 'madness' as a *political* category (19). The politicisation of

common ‘disorders’, such as depression, might be one way in which the delusions of capitalism as the best and only way to organise human life might be interrupted, the very *commonness* of depression, for example, challenging capitalist realism’s utopia (19). As well as political categories, depression and disorder might be interpreted as experiences which involve rupture and possibly create a space for the new.

Dissent and Conflict

As Awkward-Rich posits, the attempt or impulse for particular identities within a group to annihilate each other is analogous to the experience of depression as parts of a person wishing to annihilate the whole, or part, of the self (825). Ann Cvetkovich writes of political depression as resulting from the need to survive disappointment and find radical ways of living that include “developing a higher tolerance for the conflicts that political life invariably produces—such as those between lesbian separatist and trans communities, gay marriage and antimarriage camps, or antisocial and utopian tendencies—so that groups don’t implode or splinter into factions” (qtd in Awkward-Rich 826). Rather than hoping to *avoid* splintering into factions as Cvetkovich implies, Awkward-Rich considers finding use and meaning in being part of a group which is always at risk of fracturing and “how the habits of thought and feeling associated with depression might allow us to live together” (828). Thinking ‘through’ this depression and splintering entails questioning what it might mean “to be in a group where some of the members are actively trying to make your very existence impossible” (828). We are of course, as individuals and as groups, *always* at risk of rupturing. As anarchist theorists such as de Acosta point out (as already mentioned in Chapter Four) even the ‘self’ is always multiple and tenuously held together (31). As

Cohen/Carastathis theorise (in Chapter Four) any identity group is also always a coalition (952). Any sense of wholeness may also be, in a way, fabricated, as much as it might also be experienced as authentic.

For Awkward-Rich the radical potential in these seemingly hopeless situations of conflict or splitting lies in the action of taking the perspective of those who might desire one's own annihilation, rather than recoiling from this threat. This involves a willingness to "lean into worldviews that might be hostile to my very life—to think in the feeling of annihilation, as it were" (831). It is no good to simply reject and dismiss views hostile to oneself because they persist despite criticism, so instead "we too must take them seriously in order to properly understand the appeal" (831). Perhaps even radically accommodate them. This reads as a radical act of *empathy* which might be posited as subversive.

Through this act, no one is *actually* annihilated, rather the 'problem' is (like for people living through depressive episodes) that existence *continues*. In Awkward-Rich's example, although some may like the transsexual to be gone, "the problem is that he is here, and now we all have to figure out how to live *with* that" (832) (my italics). Awkward-Rich concludes that resolution is (like utopianism perhaps) always deferred and that "these relations, defined as they are by continual deferral, will likely leave no one feeling good, but isn't this, the depressed transsexual asks, a precondition for relating at all?" (Awkward-Rich 838). The continual deferral of resolution is a precondition for relating which is not geared towards a kind of utopian end-state total harmony with nothing further to do or say because resolution is an ending of action, of relating. Resolution would therefore mean no longer relating, a state of stagnancy or death. As Sargisson argues, a closed utopianism, or a view of utopianism as a closed and finished state, announces the end of process and political debate; perfection=death (*Contemporary* 37). The 'reality' then, is that relating (and

merely being alive) is ongoing, not resolvable, and that it is unsatisfactory and potentially painful. Trying to “figure out how to live with that” might also be taken as a description of one function of utopianism for feminist theory. ‘Figuring out how to live’ with these, is not optional, but a necessary component of feminist utopianism if relationality and radical hospitality is what constitutes feminist utopianism (Wagner-Lawlor 19) and the expectation of “no one feeling good” is a precondition for relationality (838). If nothing else, such a sentiment interrupts the assumption that utopianism is synonymous with happiness and harmony, as critical utopias of course show. Utopianism has more to do with the often messy politics of relating which are not always happy and harmonious.

Relationships almost inevitably involve some kind of conflict, friction or point at which the boundary between ‘self’ and ‘other’ becomes apparent. As Ahmed explains, it is only through interruption or “painful encounters” that surfaces and distinctions are felt as “being there”: that is, “the impression of a surface is an effect of such intensification of feeling” (241). This “materialisation” (Butler in Ahmed) or “intensification” (Ahmed’s term) is the process through which boundaries and fixity is created and such an argument suggests that “feelings are not about the inside getting out or the outside getting in but that they ‘affect’ the very distinction of inside and outside in the first place” (241). Further, “what ‘makes’ those borders also unmakes them. In other words, what separates us from others also connects us to others” (241) similar to what Irigaray argues (Chapter Four). To illustrate, surfaces, such as our own skin, seemingly contain the individual but are also the very points at which an individual comes into contact with others (241). This ceases to seem contradictory if we “think of the skin as a surface that is felt only in the event of being ‘impressed upon’ in the encounters we have with others” rather than assuming that the skin is already there (241). This is another way of saying that the ‘outside’ only makes sense in

relation to there being an 'inside', or that the concept of the 'self' or of individuality only appears through a relation to 'the other'.

The relationship between pain and solidarity is illustrated in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* in which Shevek announces that "suffering is the condition on which we live" (Le Guin 52), and although various pains should and can be prevented "Pain" itself cannot (52). Yet he wonders whether it's all a misunderstanding,

this grasping after happiness, this fear of pain...If instead of fearing it and running from it, one could...get through it, go beyond it. There is something beyond it. It's the self that suffers, and there's a place where the self—ceases. I don't know how to say it. But I believe that the reality, the truth which I recognise in suffering as I don't in comfort and happiness—that the reality of pain is not pain. If you can get through it. If you can endure it all the way (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 53).

Although its subject is pain and suffering, this place that is 'not yet', the sense of "something beyond" carries utopian connotations so that seemingly Shevek/Le Guin reaches towards a utopian construction or experience of pain. In another way, pain might constitute a kind of going "beyond", a kind of "not yet" or transcendence which is simultaneously an immanent and material embodied experience. In this there is a desire for the ceasing of the self, perhaps even annihilation which might also be recognised as a kind of utopian longing for non-selfhood, for experience of an alternative way of being. This seems to again speak to a desire for transcendence, through an experience which is embodied.

This might also speak to a desire to transcend the individual body, and it is the sharing of pain which Shevek seems to see as most profound. Shevek declares that this is

what “brotherhood really is. It begins—it begins in shared pain” (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 54). Asked where it ends he replies, “I don’t know. I don’t know yet”. This ‘not yet’ might be interpreted as another utopian gesture which implies that the ‘ending’ of “brotherhood”, kinship or relationality, is always deferred: perhaps another ‘condition’ of human existence. It must always be put off because we exist because we are “nothing but relationality” always “consciously choosing co-existence” which is “always to come” (Morton, “Queer Ecology” 277). Like utopianism and the resolution of conflict between identities which depend on each other’s annihilation (Awkward-Rich 825), the ending of relationality is also always deferred. Continued existence hinges on cooperation, rather than competition (Morton, “Queer Ecology” 276) and as another character contests, the ‘reality’ of life is not suffering but rather, “the reality of our life is in love, in solidarity,” because “love is the true condition of human life” (Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 53). Love and attempts at coalitions and relating can of course, be painful.

This link between pain and solidarity is interesting in that, as Ahmed points out, pain can only be talked about in terms of private pain given that no one can ever actually feel the pain of someone else (245). Yet this very *failure* to feel, this *gap* or negation perhaps forms the basis for empathetic relating. According to Ahmed it is “the ungraspability of the other’s pain that compels us to approach others and that hence binds us with others” and that responding to someone else’s pain is “responding to the urgency of that which cannot be grasped, an ‘ungraspability’ (rather than an identity) that is shared and that constitutes what we could call the sociality of pain” (245). It is ungraspability, or non-ness or negation and not *identity* then, that underlies this relating. The ungraspable, like the unrepresentable, or more-than-representable (Brace and Johns-Putra 406) consists in the inevitable *failure* to ever feel what another feels, and this necessitates the imaginative leap

of empathy vital to utopianism (Seymour 12). Feminism, such that it is a result of structural pain and lack, comes in to being through pain, but “not because pain offers an identity, but because pain fails to offer an identity” (Ahmed 245). In terms of a collective project of feminism then, it is to respond to the pain of others, but only by ‘approaching’ and never accessing pain (Ahmed 245). Although one can never inhabit the body of ‘the other’ and truly ‘know’ another’s pain, the “politics of collectivity” (245) *is* the very problem of trying, and never being able to, cross, to transcend, the gap—it is the problem of the non/more than representable.

As I suggested in Part Two, there is something about negativity that seems important for utopianism. Perhaps this is best conceptualised in terms of ‘yearning’. Yearning is a utopian mode (Wagner-Lawlor 11) so crucial to feminism that Haraway has said that discourse disconnected from yearning does “not make enough sense”, in fact, yearning is the very basis for feminist standpoint (qtd in Wagner-Lawlor 11). As bell hooks theorises, yearning has revolutionary potential, which she links to the longing for “critical voice” or “common literacy” of those who have been silenced by master narratives in a climate of inequality, hegemony and domination. This sense is felt across many groups, despite differences in specific circumstances, so that a yearning which “cuts across boundaries” (hooks n.p) is grounds for theory which “calls attention to those shared sensibilities that cross the boundaries of class, gender, race etc” and this might be “fertile ground for the construction of empathy—ties that would promote recognition of common commitments, and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition” (hooks). Yearning appears as a hopeful potential within hopelessness even—perhaps especially-- when this includes being part of a group which is always at risk of splintering (Awkward-Rich 828). It might be this *lack* of integration, rather than harmony and wholeness, which provides fertile ground for the kind

of yearning of which hooks writes—a yearning which can transgress boundaries anyway, and promote empathy, solidarity and coalition. Importantly, acknowledging these ‘gaps’ and fractures involves empathy, which in turn always requires imagination (Seymour 12). This returns us again, to the complicated uses of feminist utopianisms.

In this sense perhaps pain and love need not compete for the “true condition” of human existence as if they are opposing concepts. Awkward-Rich describes desire as “that which causes us to reach for something outside of ourselves” (838), like Shevek’s conception of pain as beyond the self, and as always arising “from a wound that we would like the object of our desire to heal” (838). Further, “although desire always exceeds the object, although the wound remains open, we remain attached both because the promise of closure is not broken, merely and perpetually deferred, but also and most importantly because something usable is produced by the attachment” (Awkward-Rich 838). Despite the failure for healing and wholeness, despite the impossibility for desire to be totally fulfilled, the hope that these might be drives a process of relating. Utopianism in this form rejects a dichotomy of ‘wholeness’ and ‘splintering’. Perhaps it is possible to understand wholeness as constituted by splintering, much like how intersectional theory conceptualises identity groups (Carastathis 941). That is, politicised identity categories are always constructed, precarious, stitched together by “tacit, unspoken, deliberate, and explicit acts of alignment, solidarity, and exclusion” (Carastathis 942). The notion that identity categories are always coalitions suggests that fragmentation does not exclude ‘wholeness’ and cooperation.

This more fragmented conceptualisation of relating resonates with Morton’s writing on queer ecology discussed earlier (Part Two). Relationality in the sense of (queer) ecology, according to Morton, need not be posited in terms of unified ‘organicism’ which assumes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and is hostile to difference and produces

a distant grand vision or 'greater good' towards which all parts are harmoniously working, as some traditional versions of utopianism imply, but in terms of 'organic relatedness' (Morton, "Queer Ecology" 278). Relating understood in this way means "thinking and practising weakness rather than mastery, fragmentariness rather than holism, and deconstructive tentativeness rather than aggressive assertion, multiplying differences, growing up through the concrete of reification" (278). Relationality is at once what constitutes existence but also produces these nuisances of fragmentariness and fragility. Understanding relating in terms of difference or fragmentation resists a hierarchical, unifying or centralising conceptualisation.

The challenge, perhaps, is that within the desire for intimacy and collectivity, for social harmony and a feeling of collective wholeness without dissent, is also a drive towards absolutes, towards resolution, the ending of relating. Similar to Adorno's concept of nonidentity, the pain and anger associated with the lack of reconciliation between self and other, object and concept, drives cruelty and violence (Bennett, "Steps" 363). The drive towards total inclusion is, perhaps, a static utopian one, well meaning as it may seem. This is nothing new: after all, the suppression of dissent in favour of perfect harmony is a characteristic for which many a traditional utopia has been criticised. Utopian harmony is arguably indistinguishable from dystopian conformity. In contrast, the utopianisms of anarchist, queer and some ecopolitical thought do not rely on the assumption that there 'should be' natural unity, but instead try to deal with the fragmentariness that exists. This fragmentation, conflict and difference need not be associated with sickness, nor be 'corrected' through discipline or violence. Still, theories and discourses like feminism which can both incite wonder while being political might "stick us together: not in a kind of 'happy

sisterhood', but in a way that allows us to move through the world differently" (Ahmed 252)—not simply 'to be', but to *move*.

In this way, feminist utopianism necessarily involves 'the bad feelings', and perhaps these very tendencies may also be critical utopianism's greatest strengths. However if relationality and inclusion are the very point of feminist utopianism but also at the same time that which causes such problems as pain and social conflict, then this difficult and sometimes painful process is also part of the utopia-as-ends. This constitutes a utopianism which asks, but does not tell us how to live. A question perhaps better re-formulated as: 'how should we live *with this*'? Yet how far does this tolerance, this living *with* extend? The problem of radical inclusion is much like the problem of postmodern ethics in general. As el-Ojeili puts it, the argument goes "if one is whole-heartedly committed to multiplicity without discrimination, then plurality itself, unprotected by any principle of evaluation and constraint, will surely be submerged by racist or fascist discourses" (86). Yet perhaps, as el-Ojeili implies, it is just where illusory certainties, boundaries and principles falter in postmodernism that ethics *begins* (87). Hard and fast authoritative ideas and standards (the intellectual, the party) like an end-state 'good' society with rules and borders preclude context and questioning and problematics essential to ethics and moral thought. Open-ended and inclusive ethics, while also problematic, open the way for working through moral dilemmas.

This is not to write off utopian collectivity by suggesting that it necessarily entails totalitarian unity. Rather, I am suggesting that it is dissent and obstruction of the status quo which forces a reconsidering of what is considered normal, possible, realistic and ethical, and sometimes it is pain and dissent which forces a pause for reflection. Perhaps this is what texts such as *The Limits of Green*, *Running Away from Home* and *Woman on the Edge of*

Time and even parts of *The Dispossessed* imply. Through depicting scenes of pain, destruction and death, alongside hope, liberation, harmony and freedom, the suggestion might be that disorder, dissent or disaster nonetheless hold the potential for hope in the dark. In *Woman* violence is associated with bringing about utopian possibilities—specifically the possibility for the future utopia depicted (Mattapoisett) to be realised. In *Running* scenes of apocalypse, earthquakes, destruction and death, fragmentation and rubble, precede the eventual peaceful co-existence of the beach-builders. In *Limits* rampant plant growth flourishes in the destructive and lethal waste and the destruction of the nuclear power plant leaves possibilities wide open.

There is still no easy resolution to the question of means and ends in relation to utopianism and pain. But of course, resolution is not what is being sought, and it is not possible to theorise an escape from dilemmas which are embodied or ultimately worked out in the process of lived relations. Yet perhaps this unlikely intersection of feminist utopian imaginings and pain might, after all, produce “something useable” (Awkward-Rich 838). Just where we might despair at our circumstances, here lie the conditions for another kind of utopianism. At the very least, a story which moves forward (Atwood), or the creation of new stories which hold hopes for transformation (Wagner-Lawlor 196). Stories which consist of relational tensions which have no resolution, only open endings and potential further revolution, happily ever after as a (utopian) (im)possibility, endlessly deferred (Awkward-Rich 838).

Chapter Eleven: Postmodernism, Utopianism and the Inward Turn: Particularity, Identity and Difference

Utopianism understood not necessarily in terms of unity, connection and the erasure of contradiction, might be descriptive of the utopian possibilities of postmodern theory and culture. Throughout this thesis I have tried to think about the ‘problem’ of fragmentation and difference *via* the figure of the critical utopia: the critical utopia emphasising plurality, relationality, imperfection, difference and becoming (Moylan, *Demand* 36; Sargisson *Contemporary* 54). I have also tried to open out and explore the concept of utopianism in ways which test or even dissolve some boundaries, namely through troubling traditional utopian tropes of happiness, harmony and human agency, and by instead foregrounding dissent, nonhuman agency and pain. Yet doing so has created or made apparent certain problems such as an all-inclusiveness which is both an ideal *and* a threat to utopianism, radical cultural change and emancipation. Critical views of postmodern culture and theory identify similar characteristics and accompanying problems. In this chapter I examine accounts of postmodern culture according to several theorists of cultural studies, critical theory and feminist theory, and the elements which remain problematic for utopianism, critical discourses and cultural resistance.

Critical utopianism is a response to the problem of the end-state utopia’s naïve or authoritarian totalising nature, which came to be seen as dangerous or inadequate as part of a larger cultural scepticism towards grand narratives in the 20th century (el-Ojeili 17). The critical utopia, then, keeps pace with postmodern theorising. Both forms of writing embrace difference in relation to both countercultural movements and capitalism which now alike emphasise difference, plurality, incompleteness, specificity and particularly against the

‘failed’ grand-narratives of modernity (17). For similar reasons postmodern theorising is often read as ambivalent towards utopia, even opposed to utopian thought as much as utopianism seems to demand totalisation and entirely harmonious relations (243).

Disillusioned with totality, postmodernism seems more committed to partial and “realistic” politics and emphasises difference, rather than unity (243). Yet at the same time, postmodernist commitments to a more pluralistic, democratic order, emancipation and deconstruction as a route to liberation, (for example Derrida’s democracy which is always “to come”) are themselves kinds of utopian visions (el-Ojeili 243; St Pierre 972).

The concern with disassembling walls and boundaries, emphasising plurality, becoming and change, such as critical utopias often express, can be seen as analogous to postmodern theorising. However, the utopian commitment to plurality, difference and particularity, is also often critiqued in cultural and critical theory. A number of cultural theorists argue that focusing on difference and plurality may not have the radical effects so desired, but rather, protects capitalism—it does not differentiate oppressor from oppressed, and it does not grasp the totalising nature of capitalism (el-Ojeili 24). According to theorists such as Wood and Jameson, *because* capitalism is so totalising, it is actually paramount to maintain totality as a category and tool for understanding the world (24; Jameson, *Postmodernism* 4). To reverse an earlier criticism of totalising, dominating and perfectionistic elements of (traditional) utopianism, perhaps singular and unified utopianisms and modes of resistance are more capable of mounting alternatives for social and cultural transformation. Without leaping to this hasty conclusion, it is nonetheless worth examining these criticisms of postmodern theory, culture and in relation to utopianism and the prospect of radical change.

In what follows I try to further conceptualise the utopianisms of postmodern capitalist culture according to critical cultural theories and consider what this might entail for the possibility of resistance to discourses and power structures which are totalising. In particular, this chapter draws from the work of Jameson, Baudrillard, Davies, Gill, Deleuze and Irigaray. I extricate the themes of 'inwardness' and plurality which I am using to talk about identity and difference. Specifically, I explore what might be perceived as an inward and self-focussed turn of utopianism (Bauman, "Utopias" 23; Hollow 20) described in chapter four. I argue that this turn inwards, or towards particularity, appears across a range of areas from architecture (drawing on Jameson), to social media, to the self-referentiality of finance power (Davies), the theoretical obsession with identity/difference (Grace), the fetishization of autonomy (Gill), the hopeful possibilities put forward by some feminist theorists that subjectivity is a site of transformation (Irigaray), and the dominating nature of what Baudrillard calls "integral reality" (Featherstone 472). I explore whether there is a useful way of thinking the concepts of difference, identity, self/interiorisation (very broadly conceptualised) and utopianism together, and in the context of capitalism, postmodern culture and resistances to these.

These are theoretical discussions, yet they may be posited in relation to what some would call "identity politics". In public debates over 'identity', some factions of the left are more concerned with the development, representation and validation of identities, who and what people are, and how they can be represented in culture. Others view this approach as divisive and a distraction from the 'greater cause' or from issues seen as more 'real' or material (as opposed to the 'cultural'). I conceptualise this in terms of difference versus unity, and 'closed' versus 'open-ended' utopias/alternatives. Abstracting this even further, this can also be posited as a problem of 'inside' and 'outside', making it, not just a problem

of disagreements relating to utopianism, socialism, Marxian theory, postmodernism, but a problem which is the domain of feminism and queer theory. As I suggested in the previous chapter, the inside/outside dichotomy, which also maps onto one of immanence/transcendence, has been both integral to the concept of (traditional) utopianism, and problematised by critical and feminist utopianism. It is here where feminist utopianism perhaps most reflects the postmodern culture from which it originates.

To reiterate an explanation in Chapter Four, without ‘essentialising’ ‘postmodernism’, I am using the term to try to conceptualise a number of particular cultural trends in both dominant and resistant discourses. While there is no ‘truth’ or ‘essential’ feature about postmodernism, I use the term as Morton and Irigaray use categories: that is, postmodernism may be a ‘fuzzy’ term, but it is not necessarily formless (Morton, “Biosphere” 5). Following Jameson I am using the term ‘postmodernism’ to refer *both* to particular trends in theory, art, literature and culture, *and* to a particular cultural and historical milieu which is dominated by multinational and patriarchal capitalism. In this sense I am also using the term ‘postmodernism’ to refer to postmodern theories, discourses and movements which may be considered responses to these circumstances. The main features Jameson sees as constitutive of postmodernism are

a new depthlessness, which finds its prolongation both in contemporary ‘theory’ and in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum; a consequent weakening of historicity, both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality, whose ‘schizophrenic’ structure (following Lacan) will determine new types of syntax or syntagmatic relationships in the more temporal arts; a whole new type of emotional ground tone—what I will call ‘intensities’—which can best be

grasped by a return to older theories of the sublime; the deep constitutive relationships of all this to a whole new technology, which is itself a figure for a whole new economic world system (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 6).

Jameson views postmodern culture as 'shallow' or analogous to surfaces, and he sees this as a pattern occurring across postmodern theory and wider culture, manifesting in the cultural fascination with the image or the simulacrum. He links this preoccupation with surfaces and images to the neglect of historicity which has been replaced with private, or individualised versions of time or living. While in modern times "delay of gratification" and waiting for a future societal utopia was acceptable, today this contradicts current discourses of 'rational choice' and 'self-assertion'. Everything must be *now*. As Bauman observes, "happiness means now a different today rather than a felicitous tomorrow" (Bauman, "Utopia" 23) leading a number of cultural and social theorists to declare "the end of history" (Nassehi 61). This is not separate from, but rather constitutes, the material and economic-- the whole of the new world system.

Plurality and difference, as a cultural pattern, can be traced through numerous aspects of culture, from the sociological, economic, material and political realms, to those of aesthetics, technology, cultural artefacts, media, literature and film ('culture'). In *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* Jameson figures some of these features visually in his analysis of a postmodern building, the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, on which he builds a theorisation of postmodern space in order to discuss postmodernism more broadly. I invoke Jameson's analysis here for the same reason. Cultural creations and expressions (whether in architecture, film, literature, advertising) say something about the times and culture in which we live and these can be 'read' in relation

to dominant cultural discourses. In particular, I am interested in what Jameson says of postmodern buildings as presenting “some new category of closure governing the inner space” of the buildings which “aspire to being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city; to this new total space” (39). This kind of self-enclosed, complete, miniature city seems reminiscent of the utopian city-state and More’s *Utopia*, and in more subjective terms, in the push of the individualist neoliberal subject to its logical utopian extreme.

However Jameson appears to see a lack of utopianism in this architectural embodiment of postmodernism. Jameson makes much of the “great reflective glass skin” characteristic of many postmodern buildings which “no longer attempt, as did the masterworks and monuments of high modernism, to insert a different, a distinct, an elevated, a new Utopian language into the tawdry and commercial sign system of the surrounding city, but rather they seek to speak that very language, using its lexicon and syntax” (*Postmodernism* 39). There is no effort to insert anything ‘new’, to ‘break’ with the old, but only to reproduce the surrounding culture, and this seems rather anti-Utopian in the sense that there is no sense of desiring otherness, alterity and novum (‘break’ or the unexpectedly new, Jameson 41; Moylan, *Demand* 21). The postmodern building (standing in as a figure of something more general about postmodern culture) has no interest in wider change or influence, but only in being self-contained, enclosed, merely reflecting the outside world and assimilating it in such a way that difference is incorporated into its existing structure without being changed itself in any meaningful way. This is the same criticism made of cultural appropriation and capitalism more broadly. It may be a kind of closed *and* pluralistic utopianism, then, but something is lacking.

Like an older form of utopianism sought *social* improvement so did, according to Jameson, the more outward-facing ‘ambitious’ utopianism of the high modernist building,

which was hoped to be so radical that it would eventually influence and transform its surroundings (Jameson 39). Jameson claims that the postmodern building, on the other hand, “does not wish to be part of the city but rather its equivalent and replacement or substitute” (*Postmodernism* 40). To me this suggests a kind of closed and internalised utopia—the building is an attempt to be a world in itself with no need for the ‘outside’ world. Another connection might be made here to the experience of postmodern neoliberal subjectivity. Much like the embodiment of the autonomous, self-regulating, detached, self-improving, individualised neoliberal subject for whom there is less of a wish to transform ones surroundings but rather the only transformation available comes from individualised practices. The specific replaces the collective.

However, rather than anti or non-utopian, I want to argue that it is utopian in another way: utopian in this very sense of trying to be a complete world in itself, and this might be seen as analogous to other aspects of postmodern existence: finance power and the neoliberal individualist utopian autonomous subject. The glass exterior literally repels the city outside and Jameson compares this to reflector sunglasses which have the effect of hiding the wearer’s eyes and making it impossible for any interlocuter to “achieve a certain aggressivity toward and power over the Other” (*Postmodernism* 42). Similarly, the glass skin of the building dissociates it from the surrounding neighbourhood and gives the postmodern building a sense of placeless-ness (42) (‘ou topia’: ‘no place’?). It transcends space and time, much like globalised capitalism and digital culture, illustrating Jameson’s diagnosis of postmodern culture as lacking historicity (6). Arguably, the building does not even have an exterior “inasmuch as when you seek to look at the hotel’s outer walls you cannot see the hotel itself but only the distorted images of everything that surrounds it” (42) and so achieves a status of invisibility and disembodiment. These aspects of invisibility,

reflectivity, placeless-ness and total enclosure seem to reoccur across many dimensions of postmodern culture and power, and, I argue, have bearing on the possibility of resistance and radical utopian alterity.

The absence of 'inside' and 'outside' is, as I have suggested in previous chapters, perhaps problematic to utopianism, even though 'inside' and 'outside' are challenged in feminist utopianism (Wagner-Lawlor ix). The question I am raising is, how does postmodern plurality relate to this sense of enclosure and lack of 'outside', and what might this mean for utopianism? Because where in modern times utopia was a place defined by binaries of inside/outside, utopia/not-utopia, inclusion/exclusion, today there are no more places for utopia (perhaps partly thanks to the thoroughness of colonial projects and globalisation)—there is no more 'outside' or sense of a 'beyond' (Bauman, "Utopia" 22). Bauman observes that utopianism has lost both "territoriality" and "finality" ("Utopia" 20) which seems at first contradictory. In one sense utopianism is now more open-ended because of this lack of territoriality and finality—it no longer refers simply to an end-state defined by borders, preferably surrounded by a lot of sea (More). In another sense, it is more limited because, without any place fixed in time, utopia is always *now* (Bauman 22). This is to say, current culture is characterised by "the eternal recurrence of the same, the recurrence of a series of presents" (Nassehi 73), and the 'end of history' (61). According to Cunningham, in the absence of any historical narrative "the felt experience of the present is one of an ongoing state of transition, which tends to present itself less as a sense of possibility of the truly new than as a paradoxically frenzied sense of repetition" (qtd. in Anderson "Emergency Futures" 5). There is no possibility of transcending what 'is', whether this means looking backwards or forwards.

With seemingly endless production of goods and culture comes the sense that such 'novelty' presents more of the same. The 'otherness' of the future has been lost, as in, the potential for the future to be disruptive has been eliminated (Anderson, "Emergency Futures" 4). As Baudrillard claims, "everything has happened. The future has arrived, everything is already here. It is not worthwhile dreaming about or nurturing the idea of any kind of utopia or revolution. Everything has been revolutionised" (qtd. in Nassehi 62). Neoliberalism is stabilised by its own instability and flux, and capitalism can be characterised as a constant carnival (Baudrillard in Featherstone 473). On the one hand fear of uncertainty, unpredictability of complex systems, risk, environmental crisis discourses loom large. Yet at the same time everything has already happened, including the end of history and nothing is surprising anymore. We are in the very strange situation of saying that utopia is not 'not yet' but here and now, in the present (Featherstone 473). This is a disturbing situation to be in given that, according to many critical theories and discourses, this utopia is rife with unethical forms of relating, impending ecological disaster and cultural oppressions.

Furthermore, the utopianism of this postmodern present, according to Baudrillard, is characterised by the eradication of lack and uncertainty, and with it, any possibilities for its reversal or resistance. Baudrillard terms this contradictory situation "integral reality", the current form of power or cultural dominant. I interpret this as another term for, or parallel of, postmodern capitalism, patriarchy and other forms of dominant power which are so difficult to locate and name that they appear to not exist. Getting 'outside' of this new kind of power is impossible because it operates through "masquerade, simulation and the abolition of reality in a new system that is perfectly coherent and perfectly managed—integral reality" (Featherstone 472). Baudrillard describes this as the "cannibalisation" of reality by power in order to simulate a new superior reality that seems perfectly seamless

and coherent (Featherstone 472) and this results in the sense that there is nothing amiss, nothing lacking, no alternatives and no need for them. In integral reality power is everywhere and nowhere at once, there is no 'outside' to power and its gigantic network of globalized power relations, and there is no resistance (Featherstone 471). This is in part because there is no longer any experience of subjection to resist (Featherstone 471). Power seems to become increasingly invisible.

For example, Davies suggests that conceptualising current workings of neoliberal power involves understanding the disappearance of "elites", in the sense of individuals who make considered decisions on behalf of the public (Davies, "Elite Power" 227). While elites benefit enormously from finance-led capitalism they do not have the cultural or political status traditionally assigned to such roles so that they are now characterised by "an *absence* of public identity, and an *absence* of juridical reason" (Davies "Elite power" 228). It is partially in this capability to act *without* the trappings of authority and public status where the power of financial intermediaries resides (229). The turn away from visible elites making deliberate decisions mirrors the turn away from grand, radical, utopian architecture which Jameson seems to suggest as analogous to utopian change. The turn towards forms of expression, architecture, art and power which do not seek or enact any kind of radical transformation or novum (the unexpectedly new, Moylan, *Demand* 21) but only reflect and reproduce the outside world *while* seeking to be entire worlds in themselves (like Jameson's glass building), seems to extend to this turn to the 'new' forms of elite power of which Davies describes. Together these can be taken as exemplary of the observation that postmodern culture 'allows us to desire only more of the same', despite appearing as plural, fluid and diverse (Jameson, *Postmodernism* ix, 70; McManus; Grace 26).

Integral reality largely functions through the abolishment of lack, and Baudrillard also likens this to the idea of the carnival in which the only law is the law of excess (Featherstone 473). Unlike the traditional medieval carnival (which provided a temporary opportunity to reverse power relations), the capitalist carnival is constant and it is this continuousness which nullifies any subversive potential (473). Carnival as a masquerade of transgression today *is* power and the totally normalised subject is “encouraged to pursue its desires in order to realise itself completely, rather than oppose some notion of domination which no longer exists” (473). In efforts to abolish lack and uncertainty, the gap between representation and reality, integral reality strives for a completeness to which interruptions come to be treated as “evil” or what Baudrillard calls “rogue events” (468). Reality consistently gets in the way because it does not always match up with the models, theories, predictions and representations. In this way reality is always ‘lacking’. This is problematic for integral reality, because lack is not supposed to exist because everything is either here and now or not at all. There are no alternatives and nothing is excluded, and those who suggest otherwise, such as feminist, anarchist and environmentalist discourses, are “evil”. That is, any suggestion of ‘lack’ or reality is problematic for integral reality because it appears as an outside where apparently, according to the logic of integral reality and postmodern capitalism, there should be none.

There is a symbolic violence occurring by which power tries to “eradicate nothingness, and create a self-identical image that has no external referent” (Featherstone 469). This model of representation becomes *presentation* where it no longer represents something (there is nothing ‘outside’ to represent) but rather constructs a new self-sufficient form of reality (469). There is nothing lacking, no external referent and so no alternative. Because there is no lack, there is also no desire, but rather a “static state of

total satisfaction" (466). In other words, a kind of end-state static utopia, but not one that must define itself by a border, the 'other', the excluded, but rather one that is utopian because it claims that it is the *only* utopia and denies the very existence of its walls, boundaries and thus of any 'outside'.

However, is 'static' or 'closed' a good way to conceptualise a situation which Bauman describes as "liquid" (Jacobsen), or what Baudrillard describes as carnival-esque? Further, Stuart Hall argues that the apparent hegemony of neoliberalism is not permanent, but a "process, not a state of being" and must be "constantly 'worked on', maintained, renewed and revised" (728). This need for constant maintenance is a contradiction of current forms of power, a maintenance enacted through, as Fisher argues, swathes of bureaucracy. He argues that, like environmental crises and mental illness, bureaucracy can be viewed as an interruption of the Real into the fantasies of capitalism and integral reality. It exposes the illusions of neoliberalism because "with the triumph of neoliberalism, bureaucracy was supposed to have been made obsolete...Yet this is at odds with the experiences of most people working and living in late capitalism" and rather, it seems that instead of disappearing, bureaucracy has changed in form, decentralised and proliferated (20). This means that "the way in which capitalism does actually work is very different from the picture presented by capitalist realism" (20). That is, the way it works is by constant maintenance, control and cooperation by many, many people and systems, and it is not necessarily a 'natural' or emergent one if it requires so much maintenance and policing. The utopia of integral reality, of patriarchy, of capitalism must be continuously reproduced for it to exist at all. It is not inevitable.

These themes of repetition and enclosure (Jameson, *Postmodernism* ix, 4, 42, 70; Anderson "Emergency Futures" 5) also manifest in the construction and experiences of

postmodern subjectivity. Contemporary culture, according to Jameson, is characterised by autoreferentiality, a turning in 'upon itself to designate its own cultural production as its content' (*Postmodernism* 42). These notions of "autoreferentiality" and culture's turning in upon itself to "designate its own cultural production as its content" is embodied in Jameson's reflecting glass building, but is also reminiscent of Baudrillard's simulacra, and the kind of hidden, self-replicating power and representations of which Davies describes. The building, perhaps like elite power and like the ideal neoliberal rational subject, has no 'outside', no body, yet is enclosed as a self-sufficient world in itself. This echoes a postmodern logic of representation and integral reality which has no need for the outside world, for a reference point that validates the representation. 'Internal' systems now validate themselves, perhaps like individualised subjectivity which requires people to be self-validating, self-sufficient and self-improving.

Similarly, what Jameson describes as a "depthlessness" and a "weakening of our private temporality" (*Postmodernism* 6) might be interpreted as applicable to cultural constructions and experiences of individualism. For example, social media enjoins us to constantly present current updates of our identity, namely through the image, or simply presenting a form of existence on social media. A form of both self-improvement and individualism, we are called on to continuously present selves in ways which somehow create and distinguish individuals whose value is in 'difference' itself (Baudrillard, Grace 22). Yet the prevailing experience of postmodern subjects is not necessarily one of individuality, increased autonomy and liberation. Somehow, attention to difference "paradoxically, contains an imperial and hegemonizing logic that ineluctably and forcibly converts the other to the same" (McManus). By Badiou's explanation, alterity does not produce a

transformative politics because it produces sameness while reifying difference, and so the difference of the other is made static (McManus).

It would seem that in such an extensive search for identity and recognition it is not individuality which results, but something of a quite different nature. The result is instead a kind of sporadic multiplicity seems to suit postmodern capitalism very well. As a number of theorists and philosophers such as Jameson, Deleuze and Guattari, Grace and Baudrillard note, a feature of contemporary capitalism is its ability to assimilate contradictions and differences so successfully that difference itself becomes the source of profit—the driving force of capitalism. It is through *difference* that capitalism makes itself *universal*. As Holland argues, “the universal is not some feature or principle shared with or common to all human societies, it is difference itself” (Holland 3). Capitalism operates as a “difference-engine” because it promotes multiple differences so while for Marx production was the ‘human universal’ for postmodern left theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari “the key universal is not just production...but specifically the production of difference” (Holland 3). From this view, feminists who emphasise difference as a source of radical utopian thought and action (such as Irigaray) might be considered within this as a broader cultural discourse.

Drawing on Baudrillard, Grace explains how a logic of difference becomes the source of economic value under capitalism where “value floats in a randomised set of possibilities, taking a particular ‘position’ only ephemerally, forever plural and contestable, with no specific reference to UV [Use Value], to the relativity of needs, of desires, but only its position within a field of differences” (22). Value is not contingent on functionality, but on a particular brand, product, or person being different from all the others. Yet at the same time, the sign and commodity exists as “pure identity with no ‘difference’” because those ‘differences’ which make possible the notion of ‘identity’ are “*parallel positives*” (Grace’s

term) which represent an infinite array of positive values that do not *do* anything in particular, do not relate to each other, transform one another but simply “jostle around in an endless, shifting, arbitrary hierarchy” (23). Within this ‘logic of difference’, ‘difference’ refers *not* to otherness and alterity (of the feminist utopian variety for example) but to positive identities, separated and distinguished from one another for the purpose of extracting value/profit (23). This says nothing of how ‘difference’ and ‘alterity’ might be distinguished, and, again, calls into question the extent to which claiming identities such as ‘woman’ can be revolutionary.

Rather, according to Baudrillard, Grace explains, the notion of ‘identity’ is entwined with the economic logic which dominates contemporary western cultures. Baudrillard holds that ontology/identity/what ‘is’, inextricably relates to “the structure of value and processes of exchange” (23). That is, identity functions to reinforce a capitalist economic mode of thinking in which identities are necessary for exchange and profit. This means that the idea that objects must be differentiated from each other and assigned identities is only necessary within a system of value and equivalence (16). This model has infiltrated other areas of culture, including the construction of gender, personality and sexuality. What Grace refers to as “pure identity” for example “a dollar is a dollar is a dollar” can “only be displaced and replaced but not subverted, transformed, seduced” and is “a phallic identity” (23). Subversion and transformation is not possible in a system of equivalence in which identity can only be displaced and replaced, and therefore the possibility of making meaningful social and cultural change by this route is not possible (23).

So to be clear, ‘difference’ and ‘otherness’ are not the same, and the real issue at stake is identity (and difference as constructed in economic terms—but not in terms of otherness). Because despite what appears to be a celebration of difference, despite the

‘diversification’ of the market, and of culture and society more widely “capital also continually centralizes, consolidating surplus accumulation in fewer and fewer private hands” (Holland 5). Holland argues that “the market inaugurates the utopian process of multiplying related difference and subverting all representation of the Same—even while capital and its tool, the State, operate to re-capture difference in order to extract and accumulate surplus, consolidate power, and enforce repayment of infinite debt” (5). Grace similarly notes how this “endless proliferation of different identities and constantly shifting value” (23) creates a homogenising force that constitutes an “abstract totalisation that, Baudrillard argues, permits the functioning of signs to ‘establish and perpetuate real discriminations and the order of power’” (23). Power is therefore functioning through plurality and difference, and this troubles any assertion that postmodern plurality might be radical.

Based on these conceptualisations of integral reality, postmodernism and capitalism, the dominant cultural discourse can be read as asserting a logic which implies that *everything and everyone is included, there is nothing which has been excluded, nothing has been left out and therefore there is nothing further to desire*. In other words, the complete eradication of even any *concept* of there being such thing as an alternative, let alone its successful envisioning or materialisation. As Irigaray bemoans, “we should be what apparently we are, what we have already shown of ourselves” and, according to the prevailing sentiments of western culture (especially in scientific and political discourses) there is nothing more which we could become (*Between East and West* vii). There is no alternative. Baudrillard’s diagnosis of capitalist culture then, like similar theorists, is that it is somehow at once homogenous and heterogenous—dominating *through* differentiation. Is this emphasis on plurality and difference not also what certain postmodern critical theorists

and philosophers are encouraging (such as Deleuze)? Does this problematise utopianism conceptualised in terms of process and plurality where it becomes just another market niche, identity, or lifestyle (Grace 23)? If this system is able to capture all forms of difference, then a utopian alterity which challenges capitalism is impossible without identifying the logic of the system itself, which happens to be one of identity and difference (23).

Identity, difference and subjectivity are familiar sources of contention and theorising for feminist theorists. At this point I want to probe the question of whether it might be feminism's historical and present concerns with individual experiences, agency, identity and subjectivity—in other words, the particular—that account for feminism's easy melding with dominant discourses, as I argued in Chapter Five. For example, when feminism comes to be associated with individualist striving and individual women attaining power, authority and success within a capitalist system, feminism ceases to have revolutionary potential. Further, where feminism (and anarchism) evoke discourses of individual experience and agency, this echoes the postmodern turn towards particularity and 'difference' examined in this chapter. The notion of agency has in particular been problematised throughout this thesis, and I am positing this in connection with the displacement of utopianism on the individual (Bauman, "Utopias" 23). I return now to some feminist conversations as part of an effort to think through how feminist discourses relate to some of the ways in which postmodern culture has been broadly conceptualised and critiqued throughout this chapter. Feminist discourses and praxis attempt to resist at least some aspects of heteropatriarchal capitalism, which might be understood as or through "integral reality" and postmodern capitalism to which there is no possibility of resistance. According to such a perspective, feminism may be subsumed by neoliberal capitalism.

One particular area in which this assimilation seems obvious, is in the ways in which women's agency and empowerment blends easily with neoliberal discourses. Gill argues that it is in particular "*women* who are called on to self-manage, self-discipline....to work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and to present all their actions as freely chosen". In other words, women are expected to enact and embrace neoliberal utopia. Gill goes so far as to suggest that perhaps "*neoliberalism is always already gendered*, and that women are constructed as its ideal subjects" ("Culture and Subjectivity" 443). Although the subjectification of women's bodies to critical scrutiny far predates postmodernity and social media, Gill perceives in contemporary dominant discourses an increased intensity, extensiveness and psychological investment of this kind of surveillance (441). Not only an increase in bodily surveillance and exposure through images, but simultaneously a denial of this as a regulating force (it's "empowering!") (441). Further, Gill identifies in popular discourses a particular focus on the 'inner' or "psychological". That is, there is increased pressure to expose for the purpose of transformation and improvement, one's "interior life", in some ways similar to what has been said about feminist utopian fiction in this thesis. Postfeminism, for example, idealises individual women "being "confident", "carefree" and "unconcerned about one's appearance" (441). This increased scrutiny of women's bodies and psyches, combined perhaps with the utopian desire for *self* improvement, feeds a massive industry of self-improvement and turns attention away from political causes (Brabazon 70). Despite supposed gains in equality in recent decades, and feminist efforts to separate the value and identity of women from bodily attractiveness, the pressure to self-improve, in order to better meet these standards, seems greater than ever.

Supposed 'gains' in equality (for some women), and the construction of postmodern subjectivities in increasingly individualised terms may not be necessarily disconnected

points. The idealisation of agency and autonomy, taking ‘control of one’s own life’ (as opposed to being under the control of one’s husband or father) has long been a feminist aim. In both activism and theory, feminists have striven for agency for women over their own bodies, have sought to rewrite the terms along which gender is defined, have tried to find or make new identities for ‘Woman’ and femininity, and included as part of feminist praxis consciousness raising and therapy groups (of the 1970s) (Ahmed 242). Perhaps third-wave feminists and even postfeminism, are extensions of this. Today women use social media to take control of their own image and their own identity construction. In other words, part of women’s ‘liberation’ and increased autonomy has involved approaches which easily align with individualism and neoliberalism.

Gill questions this very fetishization of autonomy and agency and situates it in relation to a general cultural and theoretical shift in regard to how the subject is conceptualised. Theory has seen a shift away from ‘totalizing’ Marxist, Foucauldian and some feminist accounts, and towards ones which designate greater autonomy and agency to subjectivities (“Culture and Subjectivity” 435). For example, “the widespread take-up of Deleuzian ideas in social theory, and the theoretical space they make for “lines of flight” (435). This cultural trend follows neoliberal ideals, which construct individuals as (ideally) self-managing, self-optimizing, independent from the care and needs of other people yet dependent on the market (Strengers 8), and the notion of the self and of diversity/difference as a central point for thinking about how we should live. For example McManus’ ‘utopian techniques of the self’, the links between feminist consciousness raising and self-improvement for women, and anarchist, particularly post-anarchist, emphasis on the self (including the idea of the self as anarchist: de Acosta 31) imply that the individual is a site for utopian transformation. Some ‘utopian’ feminist, anarchist and queer visions for

autonomous identity formation and or political-cultural change even claim that people are not independent, individual and autonomous *enough* (McKenna 3).

One interpretation of this turn in some critical theory and resistant discourses like feminism, is that it does not transcend the broader neoliberal capitalist discourse. If this is the case, then it would seem that ‘radical’ work (academic, activist, creative) which conveys and tries to bring about more autonomy (and perhaps utopian otherness) may reinforce those discourses such as neoliberalism and the ‘difference engine’ of capitalism (Holland 3) that insist that autonomy, otherness (in the form of difference) and choice have already arrived in everyday life. Simply revealing or affirming that autonomy, resistance or utopianism avoids examining the relationship between culture and subjectivity, how certain ideals become “internalised and made our own, that is really, truly, deeply our own, felt not as external impositions but as authentically ours” (Gill, “Culture and Subjectivity” 436). The utopian impulse framed in this way—as culturally contingent yet ‘authentically’ felt as one’s own—suggests that the utopian impulse may not necessarily lead to revolutionary transformation as much as give the false impression that the status-quo *is* revolutionary. For example, with this shift towards autonomy comes the notion that identity can be claimed in ways which are autonomous and affirming (for example as women, queer, black, gender-fluid), in contrast to older theories (following Foucault, Allen 515) which have taken pains to show that identities are always entangled with power and so are not really ‘free’ or liberating in themselves. Affirming difference, without sufficient critique of how it functions within postmodern capitalist culture, simply supports the status quo. Through this reification of identity and difference—including compulsory individuality, the economic logic of equivalence which Baudrillard claims underlies identity is reproduced (Holland 3; Grace, 16).

As cynical as it may seem to note the ways in which critical discourses reproduce dominant ones, it may be important to do so in order to understand how utopianism might be used. Gill (following Judith Williamson) cautions against a tendency to search for “strands of resistance” in everything one sees or reads in order to resurrect radical political activism when it has disappeared from the streets and traditional sites of resistance. Gill argues that claiming that popular culture is in fact actively engaged in “subversion” is a way of comforting and compensating for its absence elsewhere (“Culture and Subjectivity” 436). Perhaps a persistent search for the utopian impulse is similarly merely a method by which academics can reassure themselves that utopian seeds are really there and there is hope after all. Without rejecting Gill’s criticism, this very problem points to the need to view theorising not just as attempts to accurately *represent* what is really ‘out there’ in the world, but as active forces which are trying to bring about a different state of affairs (or improvement on existing ones). That is, the kind of grasping at straws and frantic identification of “strands of resistance” of which Gill and Williamson are critical, might be understood as small acts of resistance or utopianism within the academic sphere, using the ‘real world’ as a referent, rather than an effort to document some ‘reality’ about resistance.

As I argued in Chapter Six, drawing on Heldke and St Pierre, postmodern philosophers such as Deleuze can be read as trying to *bring about* a utopia or increased autonomy (through the activity of writing and theorising), rather than *representing* utopia as a reality which has already materialised in everyday life. It is only where such theory or philosophy is taken to *represent* reality, that it can be read as suggesting that utopia has already arrived, or that the status-quo is revolutionary. Deleuze and Guattari, for example, do not hold their philosophy to be *representative*, but *creative*, and rather than trying to represent the world, attempt to create concepts which offer new perspectives and

orientations in order to overcome problems which have arisen because present modes are no longer adequate (Holland 19). As I have argued, writing and theorising are not just forms of passive representation, but activities in themselves. Writing is not simply a tool of representation but a way of thinking and 'doing' (St. Pierre 967). As a form of writing activity occurring from a 'utopian pole', academic theorising might be understood as attempting to 'step towards the other' (St. Pierre) or, like fiction, "over-reaching into the unknown" (Delrez xvi). The problem is, that this activity can still be interpreted as a reflection of what is immanent, that utopia has already arrived, the 'real world', which can now mean anything because there is no longer any referent. Because of postmodern capitalism's all-encompassing nature, there is no place from which, or to, "over-reach".

Rather than transcendental, then, feminist, anarchist, queer and ecopolitical discourses might be read as demanding a delivery on promises which are already *immanent* in the dominant culture. As Buchanan posits "demanding a full delivery on the utopian promises of postmodern capitalism" is one enactment of a resistant utopian politics (91). That is, when capitalism and consumerism promise the good life, rather than dismissing this as shallow and commonly accepted perfidiousness to be ignored, these promises can be held to account to "demand" that these ideologies deliver what they promise and "make good on the fantastic society it conjures for us (safe, peaceful, bountiful and so forth)" (91). Taking capitalist and consumerist discourses seriously, and not allowing them to make promises so lightly, may be more powerful than dismissal which simply "lets capitalism off the hook" (91). That is, in order to be convincing, capitalism evokes notions with common appeal such as freedom, choice, improvement, advancement, or harmony. As one strategy for resistance, critical theory and resistant discourses may take these promises seriously, rather than dismiss them as unrealisable dreams, or ways of making capitalism more

palatable. Yet this again returns us to the issue of whether engaging dominant discourses, rather than seeking to go past or transcend them, can be considered a radical or utopian approach.

As I have argued in previous chapters (Chapter Six in particular), the notion of the transcendent on which utopianism seemingly depends, troubles some critical theorists. This is especially relevant to postmodern theorists who deconstruct notions of 'inside' and 'outside' or note the ways in which these have already been eroded in many areas of postmodern life, theory and power. That is, it is majorly problematic from certain perspectives in critical theory to suggest that anything could exist 'outside' of power and dominant discourses, because this suggests some magical ability to transcend the power-inscribed realities and bodies through which we exist (Allen 515; Felski 6). The problem of imagining anything different, whether in theory, art or for utopian means, is one related to transcendence, as I argued in Chapter Six. Perhaps it is not possible to imagine any kind of alterity 'truly outside' of present power structures.

The impossibility of transcending power, and the many similarities I have noted between what I am calling alternative or counter-cultural discourses, and the dominant discourses they are supposed to be resisting, seems to suggest that alternatives do not exist, but are simply part of the same all-inclusive postmodern capitalism or integral reality. Even suggesting the notion of 'alterity' as a better way to think about utopianism may be reflective of the capitalist and neoliberal obsession with difference and its commodification (because it is a source of profit, and because identities are necessary for exchange). For example, even to speak of utopianism and alterity in terms of 'options' and 'choices' arguably echoes neoliberal discourses of self-responsibility and capitalist discourses of difference and commodification of culture. It might be argued that utopianism's inability to

transcend the present has always been the case. It is often said that utopias say more about current society than any imagined one. This is a notion which appears also in relation to theory and creativity, as I argued in Chapter Six. That is, the idea of there being any ‘outside’ to power, or ‘transcendence’ to ‘see anew’ in order to reach a ‘truer’ version of reality seems epistemologically and ontologically dubious. When followed through to its logical conclusions we find that it doesn’t make sense—there is no ‘outside’ to our own perceptions, no ‘outside’ to the experience of subjectivity, and no ‘outside’ to power (Allen 519). Therefore the transcendent or outside or alternative or utopian can never exist and it should be easy to theorise away.

Yet, as I have argued, it does *not* seem so easy to theorise away, given the quiet *persistence* of utopianism in critical theory and radical discourses. According to Adorno the desire for transcendence endures because “nothing could be experienced as truly alive if something that transcends life were not promised also...The transcendent is, and it is not” (qtd. in Bennett, “Steps” 354). Granted, an underlying assumption of this thesis is that certain theories, texts and discourses can be read as ‘resistant’ or ‘utopian’. However, I have also considered the ways in which these may *not* be resistant and capable of communicating or practising textual or discursive alterity, namely by noting the ways in which feminist, anarchist, environmentalist discourses and ‘identity politics’ seemingly replicate certain characteristics of dominant discourses of neoliberalism, capitalism and postmodernism, characteristics such as plurality, open-endedness, growth and the individualised agentic subject. This dilemma is related to another one: the all-inclusiveness of capitalism and current forms of power, and the impossibility to get ‘outside’. As I have argued, the logic that claims that everything is included and so there is nothing outside, in fact there is no outside that exists at all, underlies discourses of inevitability—that there is no alternative to

capitalism. That is, the critical view that we can never get outside, happens to nicely reinforce the idea that there *is* no outside, and there is nothing outside of postmodern capitalism and patriarchy which already includes everything and so there are no alternatives. Without an inside/outside binary, what remains is a kind of all-inclusivity meaning that not-yet is written out of the discourse.

In this case, while there are many arguments which can be made against the transcendent in relation to resistance and utopia, it is perhaps equally problematic to *lose* this idea of a beyond and a not-yet. Because the reality of “integral reality” is not total inclusion: it is its underside of lack, exclusion and discrimination (Featherstone 473). *Being totally ‘inclusive’ is just as mythical as getting ‘outside’*. One thing missing from this carnivalesque total state of postmodern utopia is *lack* itself. This lack may turn out to be quite important. As Featherstone argues, humans are “creatures of the limit” (473) and “like reality itself, are not built for completion” (473). There is the potential to read permeability here, with all its holes and lacks, incompleteness and liminalities, as a utopian zone. Similarly, Awkward-Rich describes desire as “that which causes us to reach outside of ourselves” and as arising “from a wound that we would like the object of our desire to heal. And although desire always exceeds the object, although the wound remains open, we remain attached...” (838). It is lack and wound then, that leads us to reach outside of ourselves. This counters the enclosed neoliberal postmodern utopia or glass building and perhaps finds more affinity with the kinds of ‘piece meal’ counter-culture utopias, or the fracturing of identities which are not complete but invite in a sentiment of lack.

Baudrillard locates the possibility of reversal and resistance in the very clashing contradiction or illusion of integral reality, where the universal principle is “not universalism...but discrimination” existing beneath the masquerade (Featherstone 474). This

means that “the hyper-real or over-real utopia of total satisfaction must endlessly confront the infra-real or under-real dystopia of absolute poverty, leaving tattered shreds of reality lost somewhere in between” (474). Like Fisher says of mental illness, environmental crises and bureaucracy, this is a point where the Real interrupts the fantasy of capitalist realism, integral reality or patriarchy (19). While these two worlds may seem totally disparate they “interpenetrate in the rubble of reality” so that the place where reality takes place is the space where “the hyper-real world of the rich collides with the infra-real world of the absolutely poor” (Featherstone 474). It is this place of reality where the “tear at the heart of global power, the glitch in the simulation” can be found (474), or the interruption of reality into realist capitalism which, however small, will create a “tear” in its completeness (Fisher 81). But to subscribe to this view, there must be a concept of division or cutting away, which, is problematic when the reality seems rather more blurry. Because of the ways different discourses fold into each other, perhaps more like a mobius strip rather than a slash in a dichotomy, there may be no obvious place to tear, because, as Morton puts it regarding organic life forms “there is no convenient dotted line that says ‘cut here’” in order to separate one thing from another (“Biosphere” 5).

Attempting to theorise away utopianism or ‘the transcendent’ may, rather than be ‘realistic’, remain trapped in limiting attempts to essentialise identity. To draw an analogy with an example of Morton’s: there is no point at which a meadow stops being a meadow through removal of blades of grass one at a time, there is no point at which the human body ends and the microbiome begins (“Biosphere” 5). However, that there is no particular point, or “dotted line that says ‘cut here’” does not entail the non-existence of either meadows or human bodies (5). Nor should it of utopian resistant discourses. Things have forms, even though they are fuzzy, and even though they are interdependent with other things. To exist,

to be alive, is to be self-contradictory (5). Their inside and outside may be more of a Mobius strip than a dichotomous slash, yet this does not mean that inside and outside, form, cease to exist, though these may spill over their containers (15).

Likewise, it may not be a useful approach to conclude that there are too many similarities between resistant and dominant discourses for resistance and utopianism to be possible. To conclude that there is no utopianism, alterity or resistance because there is no identifiable essence so it might as well be capitalist and patriarchal, and, like the meadow into the car park, is easily converted so, is a drive to eliminate it. Rather, I wish to consider Morton's proposition, drawing on Irigaray, that 'fuzziness' does not mean formless or non-existent: critical feminist utopianisms, for example, still exist as oppositional acts and declarations of alternatives in a system which insists that alternatives do not exist and tries to co-opt all opposition. It is perhaps because of this entanglement, this inability to cleanly 'cut' or transcend that it is important to remain vigilant to the various ways in which the utopianisms of resistant and dominant discourses fall together. This means, to continuously probe discourses, movements and power structures for what worlds they are constituting or trying to bring about.

Yet the metaphors of critical theory and utopianism are often ones of *rupture* and *break*. Perhaps it is significant, then, that theorists and authors also emphasise negation, including dystopianism, and negation as always also containing positive alternatives (Eckert 69; Reedy 178; Baccolini). Fictional works such as McAlpine's and Piercy's feature breaks (or images of destruction), similar to what Suvin calls *novum*: a true break with the present (Suvin 3; Moylan, *Demand* 21). Theorists such as Cevalco emphasise the importance of this break itself as utopian disruption of the status-quo by insisting on the existence of alterity, rather than offering a complete, harmonious picture of utopia 'after the revolution',

because the break is what creates possibilities (Cervasco 61). Breakthroughs might take the form of surprise rogue events (Baudrillard, Featherstone 468), discrete points (Guattari in Fournier 207), tiny Foucauldian fractures and practices of the self (Allen 518), portals to alterity (Wagner-Lawlor 15), spontaneous art (Marcuse, el-Ojeili 236), thing agency and assemblages (Bennett, "Steps" 348), the interruption of the Real into the real (Fisher 19), cracks in the system of capitalism (Holloway 8) and utopian impulses (Bloch 42). In other words, the *surprising* and unexpected, rather than another totalising utopian plan. These gaps, as I have tried to argue, hold some promising utopian alterity because exactly where we lack (for example, concepts, language or visual modes of representation) is where creativity, imagination and empathy becomes most necessary and constitutes a kind of over-reaching towards the unknown or not-yet (which I have argued is an activity of both theorising and creative writing).

In this chapter I have used accounts of postmodern culture and theory, and Baudrillard's concept of "integral reality" to examine why it seems so difficult to imagine alternatives to capitalist culture, and why the proliferation of 'difference' does not lend itself to utopian alterity and radical change. Postmodern theorising, art, subjectivities and popular culture, which emphasise plurality and difference over identity and structure, regardless of how 'resistant' these are supposed to be, may remain entangled with other manifestations of postmodernism and capitalism. However, these entanglements and entwinings, for instance of feminism and capitalist patriarchy, do not mean that they should be viewed as one and the same. While all things are interdependent and "fuzzy", this does not mean that they are "formless" (Morton, "Biosphere" 5). It is a kind of existence and non-existence at once, an existence which is deeply ironic in that things are "here and not here at the very same time" (15). I have posited this as one way of understanding resistant

discourses and utopianism in postmodern culture. Like power is everywhere and nowhere at once, resistance too is nowhere and also everywhere. Utopia is always here and not here. Yet while resistant and dominant discourses are tightly entwined there is a place in which they deviate. The important distinguishing feature, I suggest, is that where dominant discourses have produced integral reality and a total end-state utopia (even though it is constituted through flux and repetition), resistant utopias insist that discrimination, lack and the not-yet *still exists*. In this way counter-discourses or critical theories might be read as attempts to reveal the fictionality or utopianism of totality by trying to tear tiny holes, make space, gaps or voids, and show what is left out. In other words, to reinvigorate the non, the 'not yet'.

Conclusion: Staying with the Fragments

The sentiment that there is no alternative to how life is currently lived under heteropatriarchal capitalism is resisted by the utopianism of counter-cultural theories and resistant discourses which suggest, through both criticism and creative exploration, that life could be lived otherwise. In this thesis, I have turned in particular to feminist, anarchist and ecopolitical or environmentalist discourses as areas of thought and practice which offer utopian alternatives. Through reading these discourses through the concept of utopianism, and using utopian theory, I have examined discursive accounts of human organising, hierarchy, gender, nonhuman nature, the material and nonhuman environment, the process of theorising, depression, social conflict and postmodern theories about identity and subjectivity. These represent attempts to conceptualise both reality and (im)possibility in ways which resist dominant ideologies promulgated by heteropatriarchy and capitalism. I have argued that the utopianisms of resistant discourses are no less real than the constructions of reality presented by dominant discourses. In promoting commitments to the material environment, embodiment and proximity as fundamental for human relating, these resistant discourses can even be framed as more realistic or emergent than current forms of life engendered by hierarchy and bureaucracy. Yet, while realistic, all of these resistant discourses are also utopian in that they hope for a different kind of world, one which is, in a sense, not-yet. They yearn for worlds in which humans and nonhuman natures flourish, and for forms of relating without power consolidated in hierarchy. These various theoretical arguments and fictional explorations are all 'dreams' or ponderings about alternatives to how life is currently experienced, and even alternatives to generally accepted

‘truths’ about reality. These examples demonstrate that there are many ways of thinking about alternatives and about reality beyond the narratives put forward by dominant discourses within capitalism and heteropatriarchy.

Visions for how life could be lived differently are not always explicit. They often involve invoking explanations and descriptions of what ‘is’, and frequently this occurs through critiquing dominant discourses. Part of such critique includes pointing out the aspects of reality which dominant discourses often omit in order to maintain current power structures. Resistant discourses studied here also, I have argued, imply a sense of lack or the ‘not-yet’ which is one function of utopianism. I have used utopian theory, and in particular critical utopianism drawing from Moylan’s work, to examine this simultaneous invocation of the real and the (im)possible. Through an analysis of a number of examples from fiction, resistant discourses and academic theory, I have also argued that by reading these discourses as utopian, critical utopianism and resistance to dominant orders can be understood in terms of processes which prioritise proximity, autonomy, relatedness, specificity and materiality as counters to the experience of alienation, abstraction, authority and hierarchy in postmodern heteropatriarchal capitalism.

However, given the totality of power as theorised by Baudrillard and Jameson especially, I have also questioned the practical possibility of resistance and radical utopianism. A closer examination finds that examples of resistance and alterity are entangled with dominant discourses and the dominant culture. Divisions are never clear cut, much like in the critical utopia which problematises simplistic binaries of good/bad or inside/outside. Work in both utopian studies and utopian fiction has become increasingly nuanced and complex over time, acknowledging problems, failure and dissent. This thesis has framed this in relation to the difficulty of doing politics, theory and resistance in the

capitalist postmodern era in which boundaries and divisions seem to have eroded (Bauman “Utopia” 23), despite the reality being one of ongoing discrimination (Featherstone 473). I have argued that, although difficult for a number of reasons specific to postmodern capitalism, utopianism can be read as immanent in the discourses and texts explored, although it may take some surprising forms.

Doubtless, postmodern theory and globalising capitalism alike present difficulties for resistance and utopianism. As Bauman and others argue, utopianism has transformed in ‘liquid modernity’, and attempts to produce whole and complete, static, end-state utopias are no longer viable (Jacobsen). In response, in this thesis I have posited a way of conceptualising the issue in relation to the totalising nature of “integral reality” (Baudrillard), while also seeking out the utopianisms nonetheless inherent in postmodern critical theory. Specifically, I have positioned the utopianisms of postmodern and resistant discourses, namely anarchism, feminism and ecopolitical thought in relation to the difficulties of locating or creating radical utopian alterity and resistance in a cultural climate which subsumes all difference. A turn away from traditional utopian thinking and grand narratives in theory has both engendered new forms of utopianism, and problematised it even to the point of its unravelling. Confusion in conceptualising utopianisms may particularly arise when utopianism is approached in terms of what it ‘is’ rather than what it ‘does’, because such essentialism is not sensitive enough to more nuanced forms. To avoid this mistake, I have tried to conceptualise utopianism through appreciating entanglement and fragmentariness, rather than in terms of unified ‘wholes’.

Yet an absence of coherency presents problems of its own, and I have noted the ways in which various ‘fragments’ or strands may become assimilated or remain entangled with the dominant discourses and power structures they purport to be resisting, thereby

neutralising any revolutionary potential. To assume that any of these principles (difference, plurality, diversity, agency, identity) can be 'claimed' as resistant and inherently revolutionary is doubtful. Yet equally, to accuse forms of postmodern resistance of being inherently capitalistic for the same reasons seems dubious. That is, it is not fragmentariness and plurality *per se* that seems to undermine the radical potential of resistant discourses. It is how these are *used* by and within the totalising forms of power described. For sure, the utopianisms described in this thesis are imperfectly resistant and imperfectly alternative, because utopias *are* imperfect and this leaves them vulnerable to co-option. But this co-option and reclaiming can go on infinitely. There can be no final utopia, no final co-option, only another story (Wagner-Lawlor 196). Yet, while flawed, perhaps all of these utopianisms and attempts to point to something lacking or something not-yet are just 'utopian enough'. Within systems pretending to be absolute, any action which negates that totality functions as resistance, even if such instances do not materialise in unified and coherent forms.

In saying that, fragmentation seems frustrating for authors, theorists and activists alike who try to construct unifying narratives. For example, movements such as feminism attempt to both transcend individual bodies in order to create the categories of 'feminism' or 'woman' or 'non-binary', while also never being able to detach feminism from the body and its specificities. This tension between transcendence and embodiment is extremely frustrating to the utopian impulse which is in a sense the desire to 'transcend' bodies, reach beyond towards the unreachable, and yet, through being an affect, is only ever embodied. It is frustrating to the communal sense of the utopian impulse which wants to overcome boundaries between self and other, even as such boundary blurring can either, never happen, or, becomes the assimilation of one into another in a compromise which erases difference. In this frustration, it is also generative.

I am framing this fragmentation in relation to the (im)possibilities of unity and transcendence which is a dilemma to which utopias often respond. That is, utopias often convey a desperation for resolution to eliminate contradiction and attain wholeness (Moylan, *Demand* 38). For example, as I claimed in Chapter Five, Bravo's utopia implies a yearning to have everything in one place, to hold everything in place. This is an understandable response to a world in which precarity and instability has become the prevailing experience of reality—what Bauman calls “liquid modernity” (Jacobsen). Yet I have also argued that seeking stability is also problematic. The back and forth, the celebration of alterity and then criticism of it which this thesis expresses, also conveys a tension which demands resolution. But perhaps as St Pierre says of ethics and meaning, resolution will “*always come too late to rescue us*” (St Pierre 972). Responses to today's questions, will be tomorrow's utopias, by which time we will again be asking, “how should we live?”. Every attempt at perfect unity and transcendence ultimately fails. The challenge is to both acknowledge, and resist this pull towards resolutions and unity. I want to finally suggest that an appreciation of fragments and assemblages might be viewed as one such approach.

It indeed appears easy to look around and say that there is no alternative, or that oppositional discourses are incoherent and incompetent because they are so fragmented and in flux. However, I argue, that for utopianism to be generative and hopeful, as opposed to closed and totalitarian, perhaps fragmentation and the sense of lack it produces, is entirely necessary. This means that the ongoing utopian task is one of working out the myriad of ways in which these fragments might be (temporarily) assembled. They might be brought together in the sense of collectivities and assemblages that connect in surprising ways which create action, “magic” or thing agency (Bennett, “Enchanted 20; “Steps” 348)

(as I argued in Chapter Six and Chapter Eight). I have suggested that this way of viewing utopianism avoids the problem of centralisation and intentionality which seem problematic for utopianism in the postmodern era (Part One). I argue that there is something in-between or other than these two apparent choices of top-down intentionality, and random, potentially damaging apolitical chaos. That is, a view of utopianism and resistant discourses as diverse 'things' or 'actants' which can combine in various ways to create action. This has nothing to do with 'intention' or centralisation, whether this be in a 'brain' or a government or a singular political theory or blueprint. Instead, this view of utopianism is sympathetic to action and the not-yet determined ways in which fragmented resistances might be able to connect. In this metaphor, all discourses are equally attributed agency (ability to act) and significance in a rhizomatic rather than hierarchical manner. Because all are able to act, a kind of temporary order emerges, much like in Latour's 'collective' or Bennett and Deleuze's 'assemblages'. Rather than trying to merge these discourses into one overarching narrative, this thesis has more modestly gestured towards ways of understanding these fragments as sharing a similar utopian cause of yearning for, and even suggesting ways of creating various kinds of transformation. These connecting points or shared threads, I have suggested, include commitments to proximity, relationality, process and the invocation of lack.

Utopianisms in critical discourses might be conceptualised as 'surpluses' which make 'lack' apparent. This maps on to what I have argued in relation to the 'non-representable' and 'more than representable' (which I have used almost interchangeably throughout this thesis). Perhaps it is these 'negatives' or surpluses, 'the thing that always escapes' (Derrida qtd. in St Pierre 968) which harbours alterity. There is still a sense, in the alternative discourses and fictions I have explored that there is something dominant discourses leave out—whether that be the negative, the feminine, queer, other, embodied, nonhuman,

material or non-representable. Lurking in our inability to define or reduce these things lies a kind of otherness and alterity which Irigaray calls the “irreducible duality”, the strangeness of the other (Irigaray, *Vegetal Being* 48). These ‘left over’ things, which are apparently excluded as surplus to capitalist requirements might find metaphorical expression in ‘waste’. Imagination, for example, in and of itself is surplus to requirements. Unless it is a means to generating capital, it is wasteful in a culture which claims to have included everything, and in which productivity and profit is the major activity. It has become refuse. This refuse, this refusal, is a kind of resistance.

So-called ‘waste’ refers to all sorts of strange assemblages which fall ‘outside’ of capitalist production and culture and which have thing-power (Bennett, “Steps” 350). Like Bennett’s analysis of how rubbish forms assemblages, and thing power or agency arises from a kind of collectivity, utopianism and the fragmentation of cultural opposition might be conceptualised as the excess/lack or waste of culture, which can form into assemblages. There is an undercurrent of this sentiment in McAlpine’s novels for example. In both *The Limits of Green* and *Running Away from Home*, resistance grows from waste: nuclear waste, the beach built out of dead sticks and the fractured rainbow. As I argue earlier, theorising, utopianism, resistant discourses and fiction are alike prompted, inspired by and constituted by the failed and imperfect fragments of reality in which their writers find themselves. The resulting resistant or utopian discourses are not ‘whole’ but consist of disparate elements which attain their power by being not-whole which then permits their coming together in surprising ways (Bennett’s thing-power). They combine because they are also separate while being (potentially) interdependent. Critical utopian writing, resistant discourses and critical theory can be read as taking from dominant discourses, *and* invoking what is left out, to produce new assemblages with utopian potential.

An anarchist reading can also be made of this sense of fragmentation, and thereby a more 'practical' analogy with social movements and activism. As mentioned earlier (Chapter Two) Solnit quotes Van Der Post as saying that "no great new leaders were emerging because it was time for us to cease to be followers" (23). Similarly, that there is no grand, unified utopian alternative emerging might be accepted as an invitation to cease to depend on and conform to singular unified visions, top-down authoritative blue-prints and individual leaders. It is generally recognised that these end-state or blue-print utopias are unconvincing, or at least today have limited revolutionary potential. Instead, we can view multiple utopian ideas and visions as being like self-organising activists without leaders, *per se*, but equipped with a variety of tools, visions, theories, theorists, facilitators and organisers (23). There is no singular, whole or pure utopian impulse driven towards any unified vision. It appears, as I have explored in this thesis, rather as always disjointed and fragmented. Yet its instances and enactments can be put together in a variety of ways. In this thesis I have placed side by side, shoulder to shoulder, discourses and ideas into kinds of assemblages and collectivities. This has not been random but curated for the purpose of this thesis in ways which inevitably reflect recent historical and current states of resistant and counter-cultural discourses and their relationships. Therefore, the texts I have examined here can be considered as being not just stand-alone but collectively constituting the activity of utopianism and resistance to the dominant culture. They can be framed as a kind of utopian assemblage, both in the sense of being linked through particular utopian hopes and through what they are opposing, but also utopian in the sense that these assemblages are 'not-yet'. They are open-ended and unstable and in this way produce action (Latour 80).

Rather than simply representative, these texts are participants in counter-cultural opposition. I have argued that theorising, particularly in critical theory and philosophy, can be read as not just representing what 'is' but actively engaged in the utopian work of trying to bring about social and cultural transformation. Theorising can be understood as a utopian act which is connected with other kinds of human activity oriented towards bringing about a different state of affairs, or maintaining current ones. By viewing theory in this way, circular arguments about what is 'real' or factual become irrelevant, and this positions theory as always political. For example, as I have argued, the politics of postmodern critical theorists might be situated within anarchism (Chapter Four).

I evoke the metaphor of fragments as a way of conceptualising a characteristic which spans knowledge, theories and activism, as well as a way of referring to ecology and 'objects'. While separate, or apparently fragmented 'things have a tendency to form assemblages and collectivities' (Bennett). Similarly, the desire for wholeness, unification, lack of fragmentation, communality and collectivity is an important utopian impulse. In its most pure sense, this unification will never arrive and, like a perfected end-state utopia, nor should it. Utopian impulses, desires for communality, are important for exactly this reason. It is the play between this state-of-affairs of fragmentation, difference, plurality and complexity, *and* the utopian impulse towards communality, that is perhaps important. Perhaps it is this very tension between fragmentation and unity, between actants and assemblages, the tendency for things to come together and fall apart in surprising ways that creates action, that which produces politics. It is a statement of fact, a condition of reality that things are fragmented and do not make 'sense', are not part of some 'organic whole' (Morton, "Queer Ecology" 277). As Awkward-Rich writes of the conflict between the transsexual and trans exclusive feminists, and dissent more broadly: "the problem is that

[the transsexual] is here, and now we all have to figure out how to live with that" (832). The 'problem' is existence itself and that it is ongoing. The 'puzzle' which is not a puzzle, is that things are as they are, different types of people, actants and politics are here, and *now we all have to figure out how to live with that*. With looming ecological crisis and global challenges, as well as continuing and intensifying racism, sexism, fascism, speciesism, homophobia, this is a necessity. What might be needed, instead of a singular unified whole, are more modest connections.

The point is that fragmentation, a lack of grand narratives, an overarching cause, unity, centralisation and anthropocentric agency does not make for a hopeless situation in which alternatives are impossible. The fractured nature of utopianisms and resistant discourses does not preclude their existence *as* resistant. Analogically, the dissent and open-endedness of critical utopias does not destroy the utopian impulse, but rather ensures that it continues to exist (Moylan, *Demand* 46). Something always remains in the 'rubble' of broken ideals. I suggest this metaphor of rubble as a way of looking at the fractured utopian impulses of postmodernism, critical utopianism and the plurality of resistant movements. It is not the end of grand narratives or 'main causes' that precludes utopianism. It is the dominating nature of capitalism/integral reality and heteropatriarchy that suppresses radical and resistant utopianisms.

This points to a need to conceptualise ways of connecting diverse instances of resistance, action and utopianism without depending on hierarchical notions of brain/mind, motivation and centralisation. In other words, understanding connections between utopianisms and forms of resistance without 'centralising' figures such as the intellectual, the party, the government, leaders, and, at the ontological and individual level, the brain and constructions of intentionality. There is little use in criticising fragmentation itself and

insisting that there 'should' be unity where it is not emergent. Not in the sense of the elusive unified whole which some may expect, although perhaps it is immanent and also always 'not-yet'. Instead, the discourses I have examined might be read in terms of ways of 'going on' rather than despairing at the randomness and lack of perceived patterns and centralised control. There are no end-state utopias, but there is a myriad of utopianisms.

Whether or not these utopianisms are capable of 'transcending' the dominant discourses with which they are entangled, they nonetheless demonstrate another important point through their very fragmentary or incomplete natures. As I have already said, across texts and theories which express feminist, anarchist and environmentalist ideas, there are few attempts to imagine a complete and finished society. Yet, in doing so, feminist and anarchist utopianisms illustrate vast space and possibility in-between the poles of 'grand vision' organicism (such as hierarchical global or national political schemes and end-state utopias) and neoliberal individualistic apathy (such as self-improvement discourses). There are ways of thinking and living which do not assume that meaning must arrive in some abstract societal vision, but that living consists in what may be 'more-than-representable'. They might be described as larval, nuanced, being-becomings which are not detachable from the relational or the proximal, and simply cannot be encompassed in a singular vision.

As I have argued, the resistant discourses described in this thesis can be read as tolerant of, and admitting, *lack*. 'Admitting' in the sense of both 'letting in' and even accommodating (like the critical feminist utopia accommodates problems), and in the sense of acknowledging that there is 'something missing'. That is, the notion that things are not 'finished', that utopia has not arrived, and is not fully conceptualisable. This is unlike a postmodern capitalist logic which asserts that everything is already always accommodated and included. However, as I have argued, both of these approaches can be considered

utopian. Utopia is ambiguous, contradictory and fluid. It is like what Lewis Call writes about the The V for Vendetta mask which is powerful *because* it is a fluid symbol which cannot be pinned down and is not attached to any particular political cause (Call, “A is for Anarchy” 170). This lack of consistency is precisely its power, because it does not offer “a specific political message of brief and dubious relevance” but gives “a subversive system of symbolic representation” (170). It is subversive to a type of power which functions through totality. As I have argued, messy and open alternatives counter the discourses of capitalism and heteropatriarchy which functions through absolute domination and requires total consistency.

The notion of thinking or reaching ‘beyond’, which strikes me as similar to the transcendental aspect of utopianism, has been a central concern of this thesis. Yet equally so have its immanent aspects. Following theorists such as Jameson and Moylan I have suggested that the very *failure* to transcend, to imagine ‘beyond’ shows, not simply a failure of imagination, but that the alternatives being considered, depicted, and theorised about are *immanent*: they are already part of this world. It is not possible to transcend reality or what ‘is’, and all of the ideas discussed in this thesis have a basis in the world as it is. There is no utopia or not-yet, or rather, it is all already here. What this means is that the question ‘how should we live’ is a *political* one. It is not about what is and is not possible. Nothing is impossible, because we simply cannot imagine the impossible. Rather, as Jameson has said, “utopia’s deepest subject, and the source of all that is most vibrantly political about it is precisely our inability to conceive it, our incapacity to produce it as a vision, our failure to project the other of what is, a failure that, as with fireworks dissolving back into the night sky, must once again leave us alone with this history” (qtd. in Moylan, *Demand* 41). It follows, that there is no transcendent otherness, there is only what is *here already*. This

means that alterity and utopian demands are *always immanent* because there is nothing else that they can be. Yet, at the same time, they seem to express something that is ‘not-yet’ some yearning towards the unreachable. What *seems* transcendent, (the attempt to invoke the non, the not-yet) is actually also immanent because *lack* really does exist. The underside of integral reality, its reality, is lack (Featherstone 474). Theory, resistant discourses and the material world are places in which this utopianism is immanent.

While it is impossible to imagine anything that is ‘actually new’ or radical in the sense of a total break which bears no relation to the present, the resistant discourses studied here nonetheless can be read as invoking the ‘not yet’, the lack which is absent from discourses of inevitability in capitalist postmodern heteropatriarchal culture. Besides which, transcendence and getting ‘outside’ is, not only impossible but not necessary. There is plenty of “strangeness within” (Wagner-Lawlor 20). As I have shown in this thesis, both invocations of alterities, and actual suggestions for other plans for living, are immanent across a range of resistant discourses, academic theories and fictional texts. I have argued that the kind of alterity and otherness sought for utopianism-as-process is even present in the strangeness of the nonhuman, the material environment.

This leaves us with the question of whether any of this yearning, utopian theorising or writing is ‘enough’ for the demands for societal and cultural transformation made by feminists, anarchists and environmentalists. Utopianism may never be radical enough, and perhaps this frustration that it is not quite enough is part of its function. Perhaps utopianism need only be ‘enough’ to keep going, the same way that the writing of utopian fictions keeps these processes alive, and also helps reflect on or grow old ideas. That is the point of utopianism after all—not just to come up with some ‘really, truly radical alternative’, but to ensure politics *continues*. Most of the texts explored in this thesis are not fully fledged

utopias by any stretch of the imagination yet they are utopian enough to, as Wittgenstein puts it, 'go on' (Moore 221). Even though everything has already been tried, says Ketho, right at the end of *The Dispossessed*, "they say there is nothing new under any sun. But if each life is not new, each single life, then why are we born?" (Le Guin, *Dispossessed* 317). We have to believe this to some extent, if only in order to keep on walking.

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